Is Your Smart Phone Spying On You?

October 3, 2012 - Smart Phones have become today's version of the microwave oven. When there were first introduced, the idea of having one was nice but they were cost prohibitive and considered a luxury item by most people .But all of that has changes and, in fact, they are a requirement from just about anyone who is in business. But, just as with just about any other computing device, smart phones can be hacked. And there is frightening new research to show just how much information they can obtain on their owners.

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For all practical purposes, smart phones are computers. In fact most smart phones have more computing power in them than was used to put a man on the moon in the Apollo Program. Unfortunately, smart phones also have some of the weakest computer security of all computing platforms. That problem is exacerbated by the fact that there are relatively few comprehensive security applications that are available to smart phone owners, and because phone companies don't give owners the ability to control all of the programs that are on their phones.

None of this has gone unnoticed by hackers. In fact, it hasn't gone unnoticed by legitimate software developers either. There are a variety of commercial programs available that can turn a smart phone into a spy phone. These programs can turn on the phones' microphones, gather GPS coordinates and even log key strokes. All of this without the knowledge or permission of the phone's owner.

Now there is new research from the US Naval Surface Warfare Center that shows just how far hackers may be able to go to gather information using smart phones. The Navy was able to develop a malicious software program and infect phones with itâ€¦ much like a computer virus. That software does a couple of things.

First, it can be used to turn on the camera inside the phone. The camera can then be used to record absolutely anything that is in front of it.

Second, the software used the pictures taken by the camera and other features associated with the phone to come up with physical maps of the rooms and buildings that the phones were frequently in.

To get an idea of what this means, consider the following scenario. A stalker who is pursuing a victim can use the victim's phone to get pictures of them in private moments and to learn their daily routine within their own home. They can also use the phone to map out their entire residence. That is a frightening scenario if the stalker has violent tendencies.

You can pretty much see how this would apply to other criminal activity as well. Burglars could learn exactly where you have been hiding the expensive jewelry for all of these years. They can even case your home for valuables without ever having to step foot in it using the camera in your phone.

It is also worth pointing out that if the crooks and the government both have access to this type of technology, individual citizens are in trouble. And before anyone starts yelling about me being paranoid or something like that, let me just point out that this new research was developed by the United States government. Since the capability is now known, it only going to be a matter of time before the government starts to use it. And it is probably only a matter of time before some hacker comes along and figures it out for himself.

byJim Malmberg
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