NASA Data Breach Could Have Had Frightening Consequences

February 4, 2016 â€“ The hacking group Anonymous has announced that it has hacked NASAâ€™s network and it has released the data to prove it. More than 250 gigabytes of data taken from NASA servers are now available for download on the Internet. Along with information on more than 2,400 NASA employees, the group released logs from NASA drone aircraft. And there is now a controversy over whether or not members of the group were actually able to hijack a $222 Million NASA Global Hawk drone.

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NASA is denying that any of its drones were hijacked. That may be beside the point however. NASA is one of the most technologically advanced agencies in the federal government yet their computer system was definitely hacked. More importantly, according to posts on Hackread by the person claiming to have first-hand knowledge of the attack, it took Anonymous less than 1 second to access NASAâ€™s network using a brute force attack. That pretty well telegraphs to the world that the agencies data security standards are way behind the times.

Yesterday, NASA was force to issue a statement denying the hijacking of a Global Hawk drone. According to some members of Anonymous, the group was able to download flight logs from various drone missions. From those logs they were able to determine how NASA was uploading flight plans to their drones. They then created their own flight plan that was designed to crash the drone into the Pacific Ocean. They went on to say that only after NASA launched the drone did they realize that it was acting erratically. At that point, they switched to manual control and cut the mission short.

The claim is both frightening and plausible. Itâ€™s frightening because anyone who is able to seize a drone in flight could easily use it in a 9/11 type of attack. Itâ€™s plausible because in 2011 Iran claimed to have seized control of an American drone and land it in their territory. And they were more than happy to show the world what they had done.

Perhaps the most frightening scenario here is that now the Department of Defense and NASA have both been hacked into. We canâ€™t say whether a NASA drone was hijacked but there is a lot of evidence to support the Iranian hijacking in 2011.

Both of these agencies deal with highly classified information and appear to be completely inept when it comes to protecting that information. Both agencies also fly drones, and in the case of the DOD, the drones it flies are often armed. You donâ€™t have to be a genius to come up with some very bad scenarios here.

The bottom line here is that itâ€™s time to start firing the people responsible for protecting these networks. If that doesnâ€™t happen soon, itâ€™s a pretty safe bet that it will cost some Americans their lives.
byJim Malmberg
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