

German Government Spying on its Own Citizens with Computer Trojan Horse

February 23, 2016 – It's an odd announcement, but the German government has notified the press that it has developed a malware program to spy on German citizens. The program is known as a Trojan horse; a program that maliciously infects computers and – in this case – cell phones. This particular program can turn on an internal camera to see what you are doing, collect your key strokes to see what you are typing and record your voice, to monitor your phone calls. It appears that 1984 has finally arrived – at least in Germany.

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(function() {
var s = document.createElement('SCRIPT'), s1 = document.getElementsByTagName('SCRIPT')[0];
s.type = 'text/javascript';
s.src = 'http://widgets.digg.com/buttons.js';
s1.parentNode.insertBefore(s, s1);
})();
```

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(function() {
var po = document.createElement('script'); po.type = 'text/javascript'; po.async = true;
po.src = 'https://apis.google.com/js/plusone.js';
var s = document.getElementsByTagName('script')[0]; s.parentNode.insertBefore(po, s);
})();
```

The German's are calling the program a –Bundestrojaner. That may sound clever but it just means government Trojan horse, making it less –clever and more –creepy. If it sounds like they have gone full Gestapo to you, we'd have. The fact that they actually announced the program with pride is even creepier. But they didn't do that without reason.

A few years ago, Germany tried to release a similar program. They got caught by a group of hackers who made their finding public. It was a big embarrassment for Germany. This time, they apparently thought they'd get ahead of the curve by making the announcement themselves. As far as we know, this is the first time anyone has had an official roll-out for malware. Time to cue up the band!

The reason that we're reporting on this is because if the program is a true Trojan horse, it is unlikely to be contained to Germany and German citizens. The very nature of a Trojan horse is that it can be passed from one computer to another by being embedded in another program. For instance, if you download a program to your computer with the Trojan embedded in it, your system is infected. If you share the downloaded program with someone else, their system will also be infected. A Trojan horse can easily be moved from one system to another. And it doesn't recognize borders. The fact that you don't live in Germany won't protect you.

The upside to this is that there is a good possibility that someone will come up with an antivirus tool to remove Bundestrojaner at some point from infected systems. The downside to it is – well – there are actually too many downsides to name them all here. The fact that the German government feels comfortable enough to develop malware and announce its release is like every other part of this story; both odd and creepy. It's a brave new world.

by Jim Malmberg

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