

Pentagon Warns Service Personnel Not To Use In-Home DNA Tests

December 27, 2019 - In-home DNA tests have become wildly popular. Offered by companies like 23andMe and Ancestry.com, the tests allow just about anyone to learn about their ancestry and to check for potential diseases that may run in their family line. But as interesting as that information may be, having it stored on some company's servers over which you have no control poses certain risks. We've repeatedly warned of these for several years. And now the Pentagon agrees. It has issued a memo to military personnel, telling them to avoid using these types of tests.

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s.src = 'http://widgets.digg.com/buttons.js';
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})();
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The memo didn't name specific issues that could be caused by the tests. It just said that they could pose a security risk. With that said, it doesn't take much imagination to understand the scope of the problem.

Biometric data has become the gold standard in computer security. Things like fingerprints and facial recognition commonly used to unlock devices. DNA is also biometric information and there is really no telling how it may be used in the future. That has to be a concern for the military.

By way of example, there is already software that can use DNA information to create an image of what someone looks like. As that technology improves, it's pretty easy to see that facial scans may not provide the same kind of computer security in the future as they do today. That will certainly be true if someone can gain access to your DNA. Who knows, in the future DNA may also be able to be used to provide a copy of your fingerprints. We just don't know.

In-home DNA tests are not secure. The information can be subpoenaed by law enforcement or in civil cases. And it provides a target that is becoming more and more attractive to hackers.

Unless you have a medical reason for wanting your DNA tested, our advice is not to get this kind of a test done. And if you do have a medical reason, then you should probably go see your doctor and have him run the test for you rather than using some DIY that you conduct in your home. Yes, it may cost a bit more in the short run, but how much are you going to be giving up just to save a few dollars now? As we said before, you just don't know because there is really no way to tell how much more important biometric data will be in the future.

by Jim Malmberg

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