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Video Clip Reveals Possible Chinese State-Sponsored Hack Attack

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A Chinese government-produced documentary has drawn suspicion for including a brief moment of footage that appears to show Chinese hackers attacking a U.S. website. There's been a long-running assumption that China has advanced hacking skills, according to analyst Rob Enderle; however, "all developed nations have both offensive and defensive capabilities in this area. Certainly the U.S. does," he said.

Solid proof regarding the origins of high-profile international cyberattacks is typically elusive. However, when Western interests are targeted, suspicion often turns to China -- whether rightfully or otherwise.

Those suspicions were again aroused recently, courtesy of government-controlled China Central Television.

CCT ran a 20-minute documentary called "Military Technology: Internet Storm Is Coming." The clip included a brief segment featuring a hacking tool that appears to be used to attack a U.S. website.

While the subjects of the segment speak about theory, the video footage shows Chinese government systems launching attacks against a U.S. target, according to Mikko Hypponen, chief research officer of anti-virus firm F-Secure. He called the situation "highly unusual."

You Can't Do That on Television

The Chinese government purports that the clip was featuring China's actions against the Falun Gong religious movement, which the government has been actively trying to suppress for more than a decade.

That possition, however, has its doubters.

"The official version is that this was done with the Falun Gong in mind, but I don't think this video is that old," Usha Haley, coauthor of *The Chinese Tao of Business: The Logic of Successful Business Strategy*, told TechNewsWorld.

This footage was probably inadvertently published, Haley said. "It was removed from the site but someone had managed to download it for the time it was there and now it is featured on YouTube."

The video, said Haley, was likely originally made with a morale, training or recruitment purpose in mind. The capabilities illustrated on the clip, however, are very real.

"This is something China has been pursuing for years -- the ability to bring a Western country to its knees via the Internet." Target areas, she said, are likely electrical grids, other power sources and general infrastructure.

China's military has targeted not only the U.S. but other Western government websites, she also contended.

"They are very good at it and this is a serious threat to other countries."

Everybody's Doing It

It's still difficult to read from the video exactly what China's capabilities are. There has been a long-running assumption that China has advanced hacking skills, Rob Enderle, principal of the Enderle Group, told TechNewsWorld.

"All developed nations have both offensive and defensive capabilities in this area. Certainly the U.S. does," he said.

Part of the mystique surrounding it is that this is one type of skill set that a country does not necessarily advertise, he said. "There are certain kinds of weapons you just don't want to advertise you have, and hacking skill is one of them," presumably to make it easier to infiltrate systems and networks.

What may turn out to be the biggest surprise, Enderle continued, is where exactly China got its expertise and equipment. Most likely, he speculated, much of it was exported from the West.

"China is recognized as a culture of copies of all kinds of goods," he said. "Also look at Russia, it was astounding after the Iron Curtain fell just how much technology they had bought and copied from us."

For all of these reasons, he concluded, "it should not be surprising that hacking is something that China would consider a core competency it needed to attain." ▪
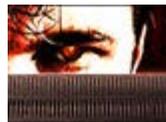
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