

Newsletter

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Pegasus Killed by Funding Difficulties

David Harris, the creator of the Pegasus email client and Mercury email server, has announced that development and distribution of the software has ceased because of “ongoing difficulties with funding”. First launched in 1990 supporting DOS clients and Netware servers, development expanded this to Windows 3.1, then Win32 clients; and NDS and Windows for the server. Additional capabilities include POP3 and IMAP, system-wide folders, noticeboards, spam filters and managed mailing lists. Indeed, this newsletter is distributed through a Mercury-based mailing list.

Mercury and Pegasus have not been plagued by the vulnerabilities found in other, higher-profile, mail systems.

More information:

<http://www.pmail.com/>

http://www.theregister.com/2007/01/05/pegasus_free_email/

London Follows Hong Kong's Seafood Lead

London quietly introduced a contactless smartcard for Tube and bus fares a few years ago, even going as far as to copy the seafood-theme for the name from Hong Kong's Octopus, calling it Oyster.

However, the up-market name appears to have encouraged up-market prices, with a short trip claimed to be the most expensive on earth.

More information:

http://www.theregister.co.uk/2007/01/04/most_expensive_train_trip/

<https://sales.oystercard.com/oyster/lul/entry.do>

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2-2525849,00.html>

<http://www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/press-centre/press-releases/press-releases-content.asp?prID=1021>

10,000 Domain Names Lost

The China International Network Information Centre is reported claiming that about ten thousand domain names were lost because users “were unable to update them or failed to re-register them on their expiry” due to the Taiwan earthquake.

An interesting perspective on the quake and the internet in global news is provided by the list of “Top 10 articles last week” published 11th January on the [South China Morning Post](#) website:

1. Quake cuts internet links
2. Asia slowly recovers from telecom outage
3. Cyberspace chaos leaves region reeling
4. Internet disruption may last for week or longer
5. Asian Net slowly recovers
6. Two killed, at least 42 wounded in Taiwan
7. ICBC tops HSBC in global rankings
8. Region rocked by Taiwanese quake
9. Assessing the damage on the day the internet went offline
10. Execution of a tyrant

The damage to the internet dominates the list, only two cover the general effects, including the two deaths caused. And Saddam Hussein’s execution only just clings onto tenth position. Conclusions are left to the reader.

More information:

http://www.theregister.com/2007/01/05/missing_domains/

<http://www.cnnic.net.cn/>

<http://www.scmp.com/>

Terminal Vulnerability

UK researchers Saar Drimer and Steven Murdoch have modified a supposedly tamper-proof Chip and PIN terminal to play the Tetris game. Saar Drimer highlighted the threat, “It is important to remember, however, that even perfect tamper resistance only ensures that the terminal will no longer be able to communicate with the bank once opened. It does not prevent anyone from replacing most of the terminal’s hardware and presenting it to customers as legitimate, so freely collecting card details and PINs.”

The Association for Payment Clearing Services has confirmed the vulnerability, saying, “People could, in theory, use this to steal account details from cards”.

More information:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWTzkD9M0sU>

<http://www.lightbluetouchpaper.org/2006/12/24/chip-pin-terminal-playing-tetris/>

http://www.theregister.com/2007/01/05/pin_terminal_tetris_hack/

Doubt Thrown on Earthquake Spam Effect

Last month's editorial suggested a connection between the Taiwan earthquake and a drop in spam towards the end of December. However, managed security firm SoftScan, attributes the reduction to a "broken" botnet.

More information:

http://www.theregister.com/2007/01/09/scam_decline/

Costs of Vista

Peter Gutmann, researcher in the Department of Computer Science at the University of Auckland, has published "A Cost Analysis of Windows Vista Content Protection". It details the unfortunate consequences of the "features" Microsoft has designed to "protect" copyright material in Vista.

More information:

http://www.cs.auckland.ac.nz/~pgut001/pubs/vista_cost.txt

http://www.schneier.com/blog/archives/2006/12/a_cost_analysis.html

Vista Security

Microsoft has acknowledged that the USA National Security Agency (NSA) helped with the testing of Vista. As the NSA is responsible for both protecting friendly communications, and intercepting enemy communications, the obvious question is, were they helping to make Vista more or less secure?

More information:

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/08/AR2007010801352_pf.html

http://www.theregister.com/2007/01/09/microsoft_nsa/

http://www.theregister.com/2007/01/17/of_spooks_security_and_vista/

<http://www.schneier.com/crypto-gram-0701.html#9>

How Not-To Guide to Hacking

A USA Congressional aide tried to hire hackers to improve his academic record. The hackers published the entire email exchange!

Note: rot-26 is not a secure cipher...

More information:

<http://www.attrition.org/postal/z/033/0871.html>

<http://www.networkworld.com/community/?q=node/9999>

World's Smallest Keypad Lock

The "buttons" are an acidic molecule, an alkaline compound, and ultraviolet light, and must be given in the right sequence for the molecular "lock" to change state.

Earlier descriptions of locks that require specific substances and light to open can be found in Tolkein's "The Hobbit" and "The Lord of the Rings", and the film "The Fifth Element".

More information:

<http://www.engadget.com/2006/12/29/chemists-craft-molecular-keypad-lock/>

The Danger of Blurred Images

Obscuring sensitive information with a mosaic pattern may leave sufficient information for the data to be recovered.

More information:

<http://dheera.net/projects/blur.php>

Humour

The pointy-haired boss can't remember his password:

<http://www.unitedmedia.com/comics/dilbert/archive/dilbert-20070117.html>

<http://www.unitedmedia.com/comics/dilbert/archive/dilbert-20070118.html>

Spam Arrests

Four men have been arrested for sending an estimated 5.4 billion emails promoting Tokyo-based dating website Takumi Tsushin.

More information:

http://www.theregister.com/2007/01/18/japan_dating_spam_arrest/



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<http://education.yuikee.com.hk/>