Yui Kee Computing Ltd.

Newsletter

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Contents

Mysterious "Spy-Pad" Reported

<web-link for this article>

An article in the South China Morning Post (SCMP) reports rumours of a Chinese research team working on a novel biometric: dynamic weight distribution on the feet. A touch-sensitive pad collects not just static weight distribution information but sophisticated dynamics of the subject's gait. An "accuracy" of 98% is claimed, though the test details are not mentioned.

According to the SCMP, the US Embassy in Beijing told the State Department in Washington about the research and their suspicions that it was funded by the PLA in February 2010. The information was later published by WikiLeaks.

But the SCMP quotes one of the lead researchers on the project, Zhou Xu, as saying the funding is from the Ministry for State Security who intend to use it for identifying and tracking Chinese citizens. If the "accuracy" of 98% indicates a false positive rate of 2%, then the device will need a lot of improvement before it can be used to track individuals. For example, if a person of interest (terrorist/dissident/suspect - delete as appropriate) is being tracked in a small city of 1 million people, then there will be 20,000 other people with an indistinguishable walking pattern. There is also the cost of relaying every footpath, or at least, all major junctions, with detection pads.

Previous research into gait recognition has focussed on analysis of video, where one low-resolution camera can scan to cover a large area.

More Information

Watch your feet, there may be a spy pad about

Beware the Cold Call Support Scam

<web-link for this article>

David Harley, senior research fellow at ESET, has highlighted the "cold call support scam" in his blog. In the scam, a user receives a call from a fake "support technician", claiming to be from a well-known brand-name (Microsoft, an anti-virus company, an ISP, etc.). The caller then instructs the user to look at technical parts of the operating system, such as the Event Viewer, where the user finds large numbers of warnings. Capitalising on the user's fright, the caller encourages the user to buy support services or install fake anti-virus software or allow remote access to their computer, so the caller can "fix" it.

The scam has been particularly prevalent in Australia and the UK. The recent introduction of the icode, a voluntary scheme where ISPs contact customers they have identified as having computers infected with zombies, in Australia has lent legitimacy to unexpected phonecalls offering technical support. However, David Harley is predicting that the scam will spread.

More Information

Thanks for your support scam
Sick of call centres? Don't worry, it gets worse...
INTERNET INDUSTRY CODE OF PRACTICE
icode commenced 1 December 2010
Fake Support: the War Drags On

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