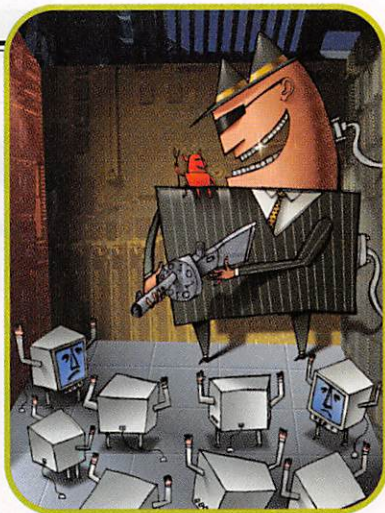


VIRTUAL CHAOS

Crime Goes On-Line



By Gayle M.B. Hanson

Forget the smiley-faced icons and friendly on-line services with their celebrity chat rooms and discounted airline tickets. The cyberworld has a seedy underside, a culture rife with industrial espionage, electronic theft, drug dealing and con games.

SATAN is lurking in our computers, and many believe all hell is breaking loose. The Security Administrator Tool for Analyzing Networks, a savvy software program created by San Franciscan Dan Farmer, exposes system vulnerabilities within minutes and allows even novice users to break into almost any computer connected to the Internet. Within hours of its posting on April 5, several thousand people downloaded SATAN. Just how they plan to use the program is anybody's guess — and everybody's concern.

"This is one of the most vexing problems we've seen in a long time," says John Russell, a Justice Department official. "It was perfectly legal for Farmer to do what he did. Now if someone were to use SATAN to illegally break into a computer network, we might be able to indict Farmer for aiding and abetting."

When Congress returns from its recess, it will address such vexing legal issues and also debate the proposed Communications Decency Act of 1995, which would prohibit the transmission of obscene or harassing material over the Internet. "The Communications Decency Act, first and foremost, gives computer users the same protections that already exist for telephone users," says Sen. Slade Gorton, a Republican from Washington who cosponsored the legislation with Sen. Jim Exon, a Democrat from Nebraska. "It simply updates our obscenity, indecency and harassment laws to include new technologies." Not surprisingly, the bill has garnered criticism from the Electronic Freedom

Foundation, the American Civil Liberties Union and other organizations that peg it as an infringement upon free speech.

To Farmer and many others, the rules of society shouldn't apply in cyberspace. For the Internet to flourish, they argue, information should be freely available. Often mythologized as folk heroes by the mass media, these self-styled cyberpunks possess an equal abundance of nerve and naivete, espousing a quasi-utopic science-fiction vision that scoffs at convention. Several teenagers interviewed for this story displayed no remorse for ravaging the Internet, blaming their victims for not mounting a better defense. And as more of the world goes on-line, these cyberpunks continue to flex their technological muscles, believing that their world should be shaped by their vision — and their vision only.

The cyberworld has changed dramatically since Congress passed the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act in

1984. Today the federal government, law-enforcement agencies and Congress must grapple with issues involving intellectual-property rights and pornography. Officials throughout the justice system are concerned that lawmakers do not have enough familiarity with computer crime to craft effective legislation. Even if Congress



SATAN: Creator Farmer and his progeny.

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Walter Williams, himself a distinguished professor of economics, sums up Dr. Sowell's achievement in the *Washington Times*:

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passes the Communications Decency Act, few Internet users believe it can be enforced.

In today's cyberworld, hackers (highly sophisticated computer mavens) and crackers (criminal hackers) do daily battle with their counterparts working to secure corporate, financial, military and personal data. High-school kids are seduced from the confines of the family rec room by on-line child pornographers even as Mom blithely bakes brownies upstairs. But defining what constitutes a computer crime is sticky business. Laws vary from state to state, and existing statutes often don't keep up with current technology.

A computer pornography case unfolding in West Palm Beach, Fla., underscores the need for new legislation. "We had a case unfold outside of this jurisdiction involving child pornography transmitted over the Internet," says John L. Sullivan, resident agent in charge of the U.S. Customs office in West Palm Beach. "We were given information that some kids in our area may have been exploited for pornography. [Suspects] were transferring files and arranging transfer of videotapes using an on-line service. We believed that adults were meeting kids on-line and then arranging to meet them [in person]. And we were right."

The investigation led to searches in four cities and the arrests of two Florida teachers, among other suspects. Law-enforcement officials continue to pursue leads in the case, which ultimately may lead to arrests across the nation. "This is a very significant case," says Sullivan. "It is like a slowly falling series of dominoes."

Just how available and widespread is cyberporn? Take the popular computer service America Online, or AOL. If there is an everyman's metropolis in cyberspace, this is it. AOL subscribers can peruse the *New York Times* or plan a trip to Europe using the network's travel forums. Sports-car enthusiasts can debate the merits of the new Dodge Viper while late-20th-century lonely hearts can search for a little companionship. But there is more, much more.

While AOL's initial menu of chat rooms contains nothing more risqué than a place called the "Flirts Nook," a seedier neighborhood lies just around the corner. By asking to go to a private room called SEX, any AOL subscriber then can request another list of chat rooms offering everything from "Man to Man Anything Goes" to the sadomasochistic "Dungeon" —

sites for the exchange of explicit written pornography and obscene visual material.

"Pornography is an issue taken very seriously here," says Melissa Holmes, a spokeswoman for AOL. The service encourages parents to use "Parental Control," which electronically monitors access to such services. Teenage cybernauts, however, snicker at such programs.

"Sure," says a 14-year-old calling himself Repthile. "But all you need to know to remove the control is your parent's password. And I don't know anybody who doesn't know that. If you've got a dog, its your dog's name. If you've got a cat, it's the cat's name. Get real."

"Yeah," agrees Spliffo, his 15-year-old friend. "My dad used his birthday as his password. And besides, what's the difference between this [going into adult-only chat rooms] and looking at *Playboy*?" Possibly, a whole lot.

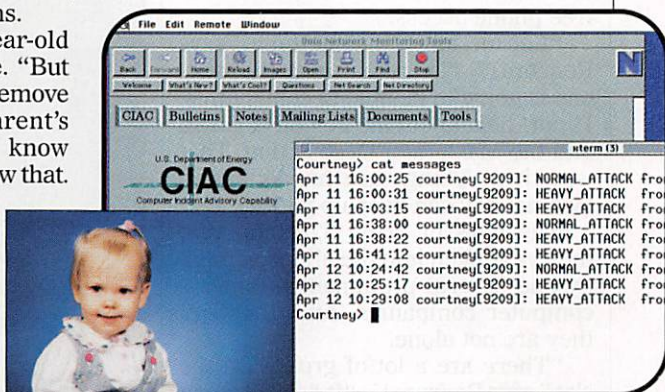
In the Long Island town of Mamaroneck, a mother accidentally stumbled upon her 14-year-old daughter at a local mall in the company of a stranger. The man, Alan Paul Barlow, 51, had masqueraded as a fellow teenager to gain the trust of the girl, according to police. During the course of a year, they chatted and flirted on-line, the relationship growing so intense that they exchanged nude photos. Barlow revealed that he was older than the 13 years he claimed, but by that time, the girl was entranced.

Barlow flew to her town and arranged to meet her at a hotel. It was only through a stroke of good fortune that her mother saw them and called the police. Investigators discovered that he was in contact with more than 20 youngsters across the country. Barlow now faces charges of statutory rape and unlawful sexual conduct with another minor in Seattle.

Officials have had trouble prosecuting alleged predators such as Barlow for their actions on-line. In many states, no statute covers the behavior. In Memphis, however, where pornography laws are strict, Robert and Carleen Thomas of Milpitas, Calif., were convicted of sending obscene messages over telephone lines as part of their pornographic bulletin-board service. But much child pornography enters the United States from com-

puters overseas. "We've begun to address computer-crime laws within the states, but we are going to have to develop an international consensus on how to proceed with regulating the Internet," says Scott Charney of the Justice Department.

Meanwhile, a whole generation of young people seems to be one step



Courtney: Image and fact.

ahead of the adults. Cyberpunks, like the hippies of the 1960s, have created a world with its own rules and hierarchies. At the top are celebrity crackers such

as Kevin Mitnick, whose escapades were chronicled by the *New York Times*. Mitnick was arrested Feb. 15 in possession of some 20,000 credit-card numbers and software he had stolen from a variety of corporations and on-line services. Fewer than three weeks after his arrest, Markoff and Tsutomu Shimomura, the computer-security expert who tracked down the recalcitrant hacker, sold the rights to their story to Miramax, which intends to make a film based on the incident.

If Hollywood gives Mitnick the same treatment it has accorded other computer hackers — such as those portrayed in the movies *Sneakers* and *War Games*, for instance — he most likely will be portrayed as a super-intelligent misfit who, simply because of his ability to manipulate a computer keyboard, should be accorded star treatment. As often is the case, life imitates art. When Mark Abene, a member of the Legion of Doom cybergang, was released from prison this year after serving time for breaking into phone-company computers, he was feted to a celebrity-studded party in Manhattan and immediately given a job as technical supervisor for the on-line salon Echo.

With such mystique surrounding cybercrime, it's no wonder newer and younger cybergangs compete fiercely to control the Net. Redrum17,

Blacksol and Keener are members of a cybergang known as Trine 32. Like real-world street gangs, they use their digital monikers to identify one another and sympathizers when they surf the Internet. The three students all attend a private West Coast boarding school where they have rewired the phone lines in their dormitory to run an illegal bulletin-board system with free phone access.

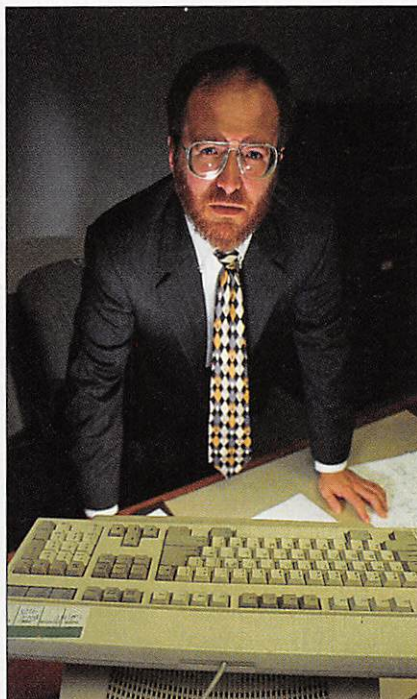
"Let me tell you something," says Redrum17. "There is no way that anyone is going to be able to control this. People hear about the Legion of Doom and the Masters of Destruction. That was then. Things are happening so fast, nobody can keep up with it."

The boys of Trine 32 claim that they've broken into the phone company and several prominent California computer companies. And, they say, they are not alone.

"There are a lot of groups on the Net," says Redrum17. "It doesn't mean that we're criminals. We just like to look around."

"Yeah," says Blacksol, "we might go to an on-line rave, maybe download a little software, but it's not like we're stealing government secrets."

While software companies have been known to prerelease offerings on the Internet to check for problems, the boys of Trine 32 claim that most software, especially games, can be had if you know the right places and people. Someone will pirate the software and then set up a so-called rave using an underutilized site on the Internet.



Charney: Consensus needed on laws.

Gang members then post cryptic notices letting others know where the software can be obtained. Sites are abandoned after a short time.

Trine 32 members argue that they aren't hurting anyone. "If they're stupid enough to let you get it, well, they deserve to have you take it," says Keener. "Software should be free anyway." As for the likes of Mitnick and the

20,000 credit-card numbers he had when busted? "What company was stupid enough to keep 20,000 credit-card numbers someplace that was Internet-accessible?" Redrum17 asks. But not all teenage hackers are cyber-punks.

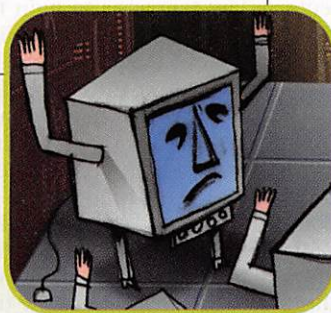
One, known as Talktick, got his first job with a game developer at age 15; two years later, he is the system operator for a large East Coast network as he completes his first year of college. While he subscribes to the classic hacker ethic that all software should be available to everyone, he sees dramatic changes in the past few years in the number and type of hacks.

"There is a lot of competition now between different factions on the Internet," he says. "Just like there are gangs out on the street, there are gangs here. And there is a lot of posturing and showing off for each other. I don't think that most of them are out to harm anyone. But there is a definite level of antagonism that wasn't there a few years ago."

And now, of course, there is SATAN. In an interview a week before its release, Farmer claimed his software creation could be viewed as a force for good — it exposes the vulnerabilities of everyone's computer system. But by making SATAN available without cost to anyone who wants it, Farmer has given away keys to virtually every house in the vast neighborhood of networks that is the Internet. Those who don't like the idea, says Farmer, had better hope they know how to change the locks.

"The real problem here is not for people with stand-alone computers at home," says Harry Bruestle, deputy program manager for Computer Security Technology Center, a division of the Department of Energy based at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California. "But if you are hooked into the Internet on a UNIX-based system, then you are vulnerable." UNIX is a computer-operating language that is used widely in educational and scientific circles. "We are talking about major corporations and educational institutions," Bruestle says.

In an effort to counteract SATAN, Bruestle's agency has released an avenging angel: a program called Courtney that sounds an alarm if a computer is broken into by SATAN. Courtney, like its nemesis, is free and available for the asking. On the day of its release, requests for the software were so numerous that they over-



Where the Boys Are

Welcome to Short Skirts, an America Online "chat room." There are 23 people in the virtual room, the vast majority of whom identify themselves as male — if not by their on-line profiles, then by their on-line names, which tend toward the explicitly descriptive.

Then *she* enters the room — Syndie — and offers a big hello. "I'm wearing a very short skirt."

"And are you wearing anything underneath it?" someone asks.

"Nothing at all."

The conversation becomes overtly sexual — until a voice interrupts — that is, a question flashes across the screen.

"Syndie, how old are you?"

"16/f," she types back.

"You're too young to be here," responds the inquisitor.

"No, she's not," chimes in another.

Syndie disappears. No one knows whether she has gone to another room or entered into a private conversation or simply logged off. Anyway, she has left behind a pack of disgruntled males.

"You shouldn't have made her leave," complains one.

"She was probably a guy anyway," another replies. — GMBH

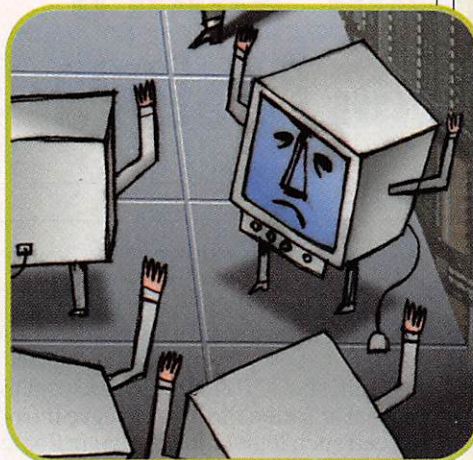
whelmed the center. "SATAN is so user-friendly that anyone can figure out how to use it," says Bruestle. "It makes a very sophisticated level of technology available to complete novices. And it can create a lot of mischief?"

Mischief may be putting it mildly. "Once upon a time you had high-school kids breaking into the phone system," says computer-security expert Robert Clyde, vice president of Raxco Inc., a security-products company. "Now what you are seeing is organized crime. There are places on the Internet where you can post information in return for cash payment. Whether it is telephone numbers or credit-card information, there are people who are stealing it and making it available to other individuals."

In addition, there are increasing numbers of drug dealers using the Internet to set up deals amid the safety of blind boxes and anonymity. "If you are a drug dealer and you are trying to set up a buy and you want to make sure that you can't be traced, you can use a third-party site on the Internet in order to facilitate the flow of untraceable information," says Clyde.

The largest crimes, those involving electronic-currency thefts and large-scale industrial espionage, remain largely unreported. Victims afraid of undermining the public trust are unwilling to come forward and tell authorities. "I know of a situation where a manufacturer bid on a \$900 million job," claims Bill Malick, a computer-security specialist with the Gartner Group, a national business-consulting firm. "When the bids were opened they lost by less than \$1 million. Several months later, they determined that their competitor had hacked into their computer system and stolen their plans so they could underbid for the project. They decided that there was nothing at the time that they could do about it."

The FBI, which has made the investigation of computer crime a priority in recent years, reports that between October 1990 and March 1994, criminal investigations increased almost



fivefold. Thomas T. Kubic, chief of the FBI's Financial Crimes Section, estimates that 80 to 90 percent of the 190 investigations pending as of March 1994 were committed using the Internet. "These criminals will use the Internet as well as the public switch networks (phone lines) and the data networks to travel from their location to the site of the computer system they are attacking," Kubic told a House Science, Space and Technology subcommittee last year. "This route often involves numerous computer systems which the computer criminals utilize to disguise their location."

Law-enforcement officials admit that computer criminals are difficult to stop, but as more and more individuals log on and as the Internet increasingly is used for financial transactions, secure passage of information will become paramount. Some credit-card companies have started to offer Internet-secure credit-card transactions for customers, aware that the market for electronic consumerism will be successful only if it becomes hackerproof.

Secure financial transactions are one thing; terrorism is another. Law-enforcement officials increasingly are concerned that terrorists will create widespread mayhem with electronic crime. "Think about the World Trade Center bombing," says Clyde. "What if they had disabled all of the telephone lines prior to setting off the bomb? It would have been even more disastrous."

He adds, "People talk about the information superhighway. Well, right now it's anarchy out there. It's the Wild, Wild West."

Safety First

Computer-security experts stress that good sense and preparation are the best way to protect against break-ins and viruses:

1. Change passwords frequently; never use nicknames, pet names, birthdays or Social Security numbers — passwords should be a random combination of numbers, letters and characters.

2. If you use an on-line service, make sure your profile does not include your complete name and address. *John Doe, 714 Caldecott Rd., Oakland, CA 94618* gives hackers information that can be used to assume your identity.

3. Determine the value of the information that you have stored on your individual computer and business network. Depending on the value of your information, invest in some kind of computer-security program, which range in cost from less than \$100 to several thousand dollars.

4. Make sure your computer has some kind of virus-protection software. Never share copyright-protected software — not only is it illegal, but you may contract a virus along with it.

5. Before making a credit-card purchase using your computer, find out from the seller how long your credit-card number will remain in their system. Several companies are launching computer-secured credit cards including MasterCard/Netscape and Visa/Microsoft.

6. Obtain a copy of Courtney at: <http://ciac.llnl.gov/ciac/ToolsUnixNetMon.html>!pound! Courtney. Other security programs are available from Forum of Incident Response and Security Teams, an umbrella organization, at: <http://www.firs.org/first>. — GMBH



Abene: Released to celebrity acclaim.

Drive to Register Voters Pads Republican Rosters

By Lisa Leiter

The motor-voter law was designed to improve voter turnout by linking registration to the issuance of a driver's license. Early returns show that the GOP may be the beneficiary of this campaign.

When the National Voter Registration Act of 1993, commonly known as the motor-voter law, was enacted, Republicans feared it would create a flood of new Democratic voters. They said it would induce voter fraud, labeled it an infringement upon states' rights and dubbed it the ultimate unfunded mandate.

But since the law took effect this year, new voters have surprised pundits by favoring Republicans and third-party candidates over Democrats, echoing 1994's midterm election sentiments. This is happening mostly in the South, where registration laws are most stringent.

"Anything that increases registration will amplify more of the political trends," says Ruy Teixeira, director of politics and public opinion at the Economic Policy Institute. "But it doesn't look like it will be a big bonus for the Democrats like people thought."

More than 500,000 people already have registered at driver's license bureaus, welfare agencies, libraries and other public facilities. The new voters are mostly young, poor or minorities, according to Human Serve, a voter registration organization. The New York-based group expects 20 million Americans to be registered through the motor-voter law by November 1996, but the question lingers: Will they vote?

"We don't have good data yet," Teixeira says. "We're not going to know what the real impact is until the elections."

Still, six GOP congressmen want to repeal or soften the law and have introduced such legislation this year. Some states have resisted implementation; the federal government has sued five of them and already has won cases in California, Pennsylvania and Illinois.

The states that have begun their programs haven't registered this many voters since the period following passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. In Florida, 210,978 new voters registered in January and February — most of them at state depart-

ment of motor vehicle offices. Human Serve estimates January's registration rates to be four to five times higher than those in January 1994; the total net gains in registration between October 1992 and October 1994 were under 19,000.

Given the results of the midterm elections, it is not surprising that the motor-voter law has resulted in modest gains for the GOP in Florida. Between January and February, the number of registered Democrats increased by 31,154, to a total of 3,477,647. The number of registered Republicans increased by 39,579, to 2,982,818.

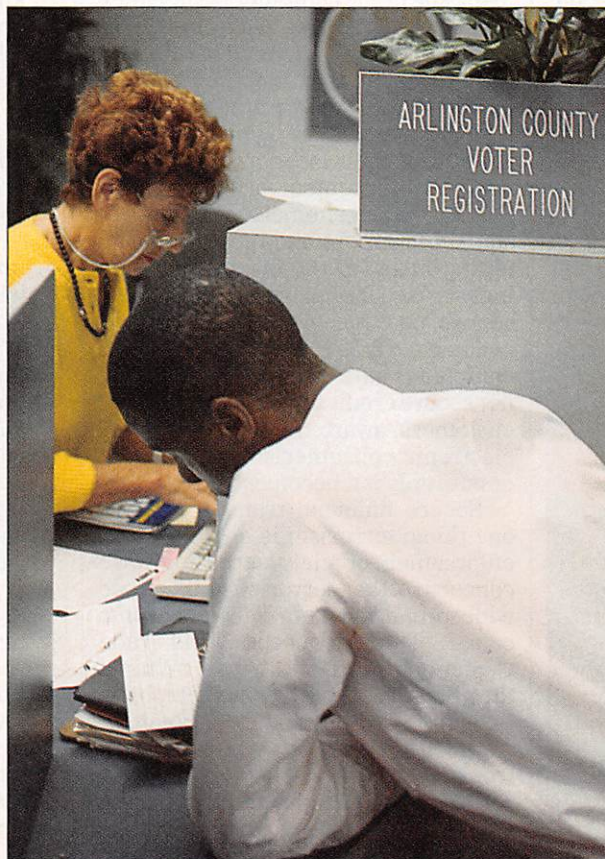
Georgia's numbers also have jumped during the last three months. As of April 6, they have had 170,809 registrations. About 90 percent of those are from DMVs, says Andy Bowen, spokesman for Georgia Secretary of State Max Cleland. The Georgia General Assembly appropriated \$6.6 million in equipment and start-up costs, most of which was spent on a statewide computer system. The state estimates the program's annual operating cost will be between \$2 million and \$3 million.

"We realized it had the potential to be a tremendous asset to voter registration and to democracy," says Bowen, who also noted that Georgia has been one of the states with the fewest registered voters. "We want to go from worst to first."

Although Georgia does not register its voters by party affiliation, Bowen says many people are using DMVs to register in the traditionally Republican suburbs of Atlanta, where many of Georgia's new arrivals land. "Traffic is very heavy there and one could infer that the people who go to the DMVs there are Republican," Bowen says.

According to a report by Human Serve, most other Southern states also are seeing massive jumps in registrations. Kentucky's Board of Elections reports that more than 18,400 people registered in January, compared to 3,459 in January 1991. In Alabama, new registrations increased sevenfold, from 2,243 in January 1993 to 15,815 in January 1995. Texas has reported about 100,000 new registered voters this year.

"The first tangible signs of this are showing that Repub-



Registration efforts have netted a half-million new voters.