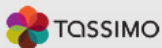




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New device looks to counter hackers to beat cybercrime, terrorism

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SAN FRANCISCO, Feb. 24 (UPI) -- An appliance to be unveiled at California's premier international security conference next week is being marketed as the world's first comprehensive counter-hacking device that may address urgent issues arising from amateur and professional hacking of business and government computers.

Hacking and related cybercrime and the risk of spinoffs for terrorism were blamed for widespread damage to computer systems in North America and elsewhere last year.

Large-scale hacking of computers at government departments and corporate establishments was behind the Obama administration's campaign in fall 2009 to raise awareness of cybercrime.

The U.S. Congress has issued alerts of potential linkages between computer hacking, crime and cyberterrorism and urged the administration to focus more on hacking to eliminate the problem.

Mykonos Software, developers of Web-based technological security solutions, said the company would unveil the new appliance at the RSA Security Conference, next Monday-Friday in San Francisco.

The appliance is designed to trap and confound hackers in real-time with the Web-based appliance, which will be part of a live demonstration at the conference, Mykonos Software said.

"The primary security threat for businesses has shifted from the network layer to the application layer," Mykonos said.

The Mykonos Security Appliance gives system administrators and security staff a real-time view of hackers as they introspect Web applications. It profiles hackers in real-time, ascertaining their

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location, skill level and other critical data and enables information technology staff to instantly deploy countermeasures, said the company.

The Mykonos security appliance is targeted at financial services and insurance companies, healthcare companies, e-commerce companies, government entities and other high-profile targets of Web-based hacking attempts, Mykonos said.

"As businesses continue to deploy applications to the Web, they are exposing a massive attack surface for hackers to exploit," said David Koretz, president and chief executive officer of Mykonos Software. As a result, he indicated, the primary security threat for businesses has shifted from the network layer to the application layer.

The Mykonos Security Appliance was developed following the Mykonos team's experience in hosting Web applications and creating the first development framework for building secure Web applications.

The Web application firewalls currently applied are flawed because they attempt to protect by using rules-based policies that are challenging to implement and offer only point-in-time reporting, Mykonos said.

Web application firewalls also do not protect against client-side code, which is where the majority of Web application threats exist, said the company.

Most traditional enterprise security solutions sit on the network and have no way to protect the client or code -- and no way to respond to attacks in real-time with countermeasures, Mykonos pointed out.

The new appliance works by hardening the code as it is delivered to the client to detect potentially malicious activity as it happens, evaluating the sophistication of that activity and countering the activity with a variety of measures such as fake responses to confuse the hacker so that they move on to easier targets elsewhere.

The appliance identifies the hacker so that future intrusion attempts can be highlighted as repeat visits and are thwarted appropriately. Mykonos said the appliance gathers personal data on the hacker to turn over to law enforcement, if desired.

"No matter how many firewalls and defenses are put up, hackers will eventually find ways around," said Al Huizenga, director of product management at the company.

"The goal of the Mykonos Security Appliance is to turn a mirror on the hacker and use counter-intelligence tactics to identify them while gaining intelligence about their skill level. More importantly, for the first time system administrators can defend their systems in real-time by launching counter-measures against the hacker."

The company plans to demonstrate both the hacker's view and the enterprise view of a real-time hacking attempt of a corporate enterprise Web application. The demo will show how the Mykonos appliance detects and evaluates the threat level of the malicious activity, and responds automatically with appropriate counter-hacking maneuvers.

Analysts said the appliance could have wide applications worldwide but there was also the risk that publicity about the product would have both law enforcers and criminals drawn to its usage. In 2009, hackers penetrated a wide range of high-security systems in North America and Europe, with costs of remedial action running into millions of dollars, analysts said.

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