

A history of global hacking

|

Hacking is not a new problem nor is it isolated to one country

1971

Vietnam vet John Draper uses the giveaway whistle in a Cap'n Crunch cereal box and a homebuilt "blue box" to make free phone calls. When Esquire publishes a how-to guide for making blue boxes, incidents of wire fraud in the US skyrocket.

1972

College kids Steve Wozniak and Steve Jobs, future founders of Apple Computer, launch a home business making and selling blue boxes - illegal telephone attachments that hacked into phone systems, allowing the user to make free long-distance calls.

1981

The Chaos Computer Club forms in Germany and becomes one of the most influential hacker organisations in Europe.

1983

In Milwaukee, six teenagers go on a hacking spree lasting several months, during which they break into computers at high-profile institutions such as the Los Alamos National Laboratory and the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center.

1983

The movie War Games opens in cinemas.

1984

Congress passes the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act, making it a crime to break into computer systems.

1987

The hacker mag Decoder launches in Italy.

1988

Kevin Mitnick secretly monitors the e-mail of MCI and Digital Equipment security officials. He is charged with causing \$4m in damage to a Digital Equipment computer, stealing a highly secret computer security system and gaining access to unauthorised MCI long-distance codes through university computers in Los Angeles and England. Mitnick serves five months in prison and six months in a rehab programme. He goes on the run in late

six months in a rehab programme. He goes on the run in late 1992, when the US Federal Bureau of Investigation searches for him for alleged parole violations.

1989

Hackers in West Germany are arrested for breaking into US corporate and government systems and selling OS source code to the KGB.

1991

Rumours are rampant that a virus called Michelangelo will crash computers on 6 March 1992, the artist's 517th birthday. Nothing happens.

1994

Russian hackers, led by Vladamir Levin, siphon \$10m from Citibank and disperse it to bank accounts around the world. Levin is caught, and all but \$400,000 is recovered.

1997

The Brotherhood of Warez, a Canadian hacker group, breaks into the Canadian Broadcasting website.

1997

A 15-year-old Croatian breaks into computers at a US Air Force base in Guam.

1998

A 19-year-old Israeli hacker, Ehud Tenebaum, leads a string of break-ins into Pentagon computers and steals software programs. Tenebaum is arrested but is later appointed to be chief technology officer of a computer consulting firm.

1998

Two hackers are sentenced to death in China for breaking into a bank's computer network and stealing the equivalent of \$31,325.

1999

President Clinton announces he will propose that the government spend \$1.46bn in FY00 to improve government computer security.

December 1999

A Russian hacker tries to extort \$100,000 from online music retailer CD Universe and threatens to expose customer credit card numbers. He posts them on a website after his extortion

card number, the press man on a website after the emergency attempt fails.

February 2000

Canadian hacker Mafiaboy launches a denial-of-service attack, taking down Amazon.com, CNN.com and Yahoo in the process.

March 2000

President Clinton admits he doesn't e-mail his daughter Chelsea at college because he doesn't think the medium is secure.

May 2000

The I Love You virus spreads quickly around the globe by sending copies of itself to everyone in a computer's address book.

February 2001

A Dutch hacker releases the Anna Kournikova virus, punishing the legions of people who attempt to view what they think to be a sexy photo of the Russian tennis star.

February 2001

FBI agent Robert Hanssen is arrested and charged with using his computer skills to spy for the Russians.

April 2001

The FBI tricks two Russian hackers into coming to the US to reveal how they were breaking into US banks.

May 2001

Tensions between the US and China set off a chain of web defacements by hackers from both countries, dubbed "The Sixth Network War of National Defense".

September 2001

In the wake of 9/11, new anti-terrorism laws are passed, many defining hackers as terrorists.

February 2002

As a part of its Trustworthy Computing initiative, Microsoft shuts down Windows development and puts 8,000 programmers through security training.

May 2002

The Klez.H worm surpasses all other viruses to date in the number of computers it has infected

number of computers it has infected.

February 2003

The US convicts a Kazakhstan hacker of breaking into Bloomberg's computers and attempted extortion.