USA claims dubious honor: World's top spammer

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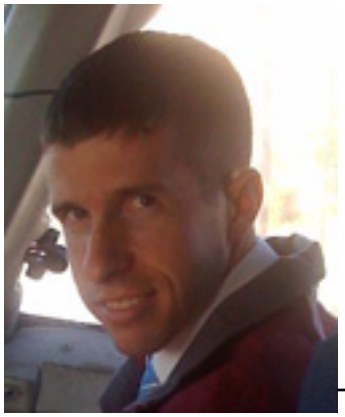

That slick email from the Nigerian prince promising fabulous riches just might originate from Peoria, USA. According to research from SophosLabs [1], the United States of America — home of baseball, apple pie, and spam, apparently — sent 18.3% of the world's junk mail.

USA! USA! USA!

America is fending off a military and economic rivalry with one of the largest exporters of counterfeit parts, software piracy, and state-sponsored cyber terrorism in the world — China — but this is one area we probably don't want to claim the top spot.

According to SophosLabs' latest "Dirty Dozen" report, it's not even close. From December 2012 — February 2013, the US claimed the dubious honor of world's top spammer, with 18.3% of global junkmail originating in America. The next closest offender — China — sits at a distant 2nd with 8.2%. India is #3 with 4.2%.

Near the bottom of the list is Germany with 2.7%, which puts Deutschland in the same ballpark as less-developed countries like Iran (this is a good thing, by the way). Apparently, the Germans take cybersecurity a lot more serious than we do.

This is especially disheartening since, from July to September 2012 [2], the US was sitting pretty at #3, with a relatively paltry 6.5% of the global spam output. Back then, India claimed the top spot with 16.1%.

And Germany was still near the bottom.

From a continental standpoint, North America is #3 with 22%, while Asia is #1 with 36.6% of the world's junk mail. But it's still very disturbing to see the Land of the Free rank so highly for such a dubious honor.

Shouldn't the vanguard of the free world lead the way in cybersecurity best practices? It's understandable that a relatively primitive society like Iran's should make such a paltry contribution to the world's junk mail output. But the US has a lot to learn from an industrialized, first-world juggernaut like Germany.

The top twelve spam-relaying countries for December 2012 - February 2013

1. USA	18.3%
2. China	8.2%
3. India	4.2%
4. Peru	4.0%
5= France	3.4%
5= S. Korea	3.4%
5= Italy	3.4%
8= Taiwan	2.9%
8= Russia	2.9%
10. Spain	2.8%
11. Germany	2.7%
12. Iran	2.6%
Other	41.1%

For what it’s worth, China also jumped up the list, from 3.1% to 8.2%. But this is consistent with the communist nation’s image as a lawless cyber-frontier. I’d expect more from the "shining city on a hill."

As SophosLabs points out, this doesn’t mean that nearly 1/5 of the world’s spammers live in the United States. However, they’ve had extraordinary success cracking US-based computers, which serve as a launching pad for all manner of scams, Nigerian princes, and get-rich-quick schemes.

In other words, while you may not send out the offending emails, yourself, if your PC has been compromised, you’re part of the problem.

Tighter cybersecurity and common sense (i.e., don’t pursue lost gold on the Internet) is definitely called for.

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