

How to elude Russian hackers with decent password security

By MAE ANDERSON
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NEW YORK — Details from the Department of Justice indictment of Russian hackers on Wednesday show that many people are still not taking routine precautions to safeguard their email accounts — and hackers are exploiting that.

The Russian hackers didn't have to work very hard to break into people's email accounts, even those belonging to government officials or powerful executives. Here's a look at a few simple ways to help safeguard your email account from hackers.

DON'T REUSE PASSWORDS: Many online break-ins result when people have reused a password across, say, their email, social and financial accounts. If it's compromised at any one of those services, the others are suddenly vulnerable.

One simple way to avoid this problem is to start with a base password you can remember, and then add on letters and numbers that reference where you're using it. If your base password is "great-surfer2017" (which isn't particularly secure; more on that in a moment), you could make "greatsurfer2017Y" your Yahoo password, and "greatsurfer2017G" your Google password.

If you can't be bothered to do more, this is a base level of security that can help shield you from the most obvious threats. But it's still only a baby step.

PICK A STRONGER PASSWORD: You can make things harder for attackers by making your base password stronger. The more complicated and lengthy a password is, the harder it will be for hackers to guess.

The downside: Tougher passwords are also harder to remember. But there are some ways around that.

Don't include your kids' names, birthdays or references to any other personal details. Hackers routinely troll Facebook and Twitter for clues to passwords like these. Obvious and default passwords such as "Password123" are also bad, as are words commonly found in dictionaries, as these are used in programs hackers have to automate guesses.

You can make your own strong passwords with randomly capitalized nonsense words interspersed with numbers and characters

— like, say, "giLly31!florp." (Just don't use that one now that it's appeared in this story.) So long as you're making up the words yourself, these are difficult for hackers to crack — and they're easier to remember than you might think, though you might want to practice them a few times.

HAVE YOUR PASSWORDS MANAGED FOR YOU: Of course, you can make things easier on yourself by using a password-manager service such as LastPass or DashLane, which keep track of multiple complex passwords for you. Some web browsers such as Apple's Safari and Google's Chrome also have built-in password managers; these work if you switch devices, but not if you switch browsers.

After you create a strong password for your password manager, it can create random passwords for your other accounts — and will remember them for you as well.

"It's more secure and it makes your life easier," said Jamie Winterton, director of strategy at the Global Security Initiative at Arizona State University.

MULTIFACTOR AUTHENTICATION IS A MUST: The next line of defense is two- or multifactor authentication, which asks users to enter a second form of identification, such as a code texted to their phone, when they log in. It's now commonplace for many email and social media accounts. That way, even if hackers manage to get your password they still need your phone with the texted code.

"Having another way for that account to say 'Hey, is that really you?', and give veto authority is really important," Winterton said.

KEY WORDS MATTER: According to the indictment, the Russian hackers searched email accounts for keywords like "passwords" to find people's passwords for other accounts. They also searched for "credit card" "visa," among other terms. So think twice before you use common key words that can serve as a road map to sensitive information for hackers. And don't save passwords in old emails.

"There's not one single thing out there that can keep you perfectly safe," Winterton said. "But there are a lot of different things out there that can keep you almost perfectly safe."

U.S. soldiers train for jungle warfare in Hawaii

HONOLULU (AP) — The U.S. Army soldiers finished wading across a stream in a rainforest in Hawaii, and they were soaked. Their boots and socks were water-logged and their clothes, hair and ears were caked with mud.

The soldiers were going through training at the first jungle school the Army has established in decades. The course is part of a program to train soldiers for exercises and potential combat on terrain that looks more like islands and nations in the Pacific than arid Afghanistan and the deserts of the Middle East.

Brig. Gen. Stephen Michael, deputy commander of the 25th Infantry Division, said the Army set up the school as its footprint was shrinking in Iraq and Afghanistan after more than a decade of war in those countries.

"The jungle school gives us that focus, it reinforces



AP Photo/Daniel Lin

A soldier from the U.S. Army's 25th Infantry Division 1 crosses a stream with a rope during jungle warfare training at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii.

that we're in the Pacific," Michael said. "If you're in the 25th, you understand you got to fight in the tough environment of the Pacific."

Ever since the turn of the 20th century, the Army has fought in tropical rainforests. It spent years, for example, battling Filipino insurgents after the 1898

Spanish-American War. The Vietnam War was fought in the jungle.

The Army gave up its jungle training school in Panama in 1999 when the U.S. returned land there to the Panamanian government. Then jungle training lost priority in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 attacks as the

Army focused on preparing soldiers to fight in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Now, surviving and fighting in tropical rainforests has captured the Army's interest again. In 2013, it set up a jungle school at Schofield Barracks, a sprawling Army post some 30 miles west of the soft sands of Waikiki. Its dense woods have a stream soldiers can practice crossing and cliffs for rappelling.

First it needed instructors. The Army sent soldiers to military jungle schools in Brazil, Brunei and other tropical spots to reacquire long-lost skills. Instructors-in-training poured over old Army jungle manuals.

"We had to relearn everything," said Staff Sgt. Ascencion Lopez, who was one of the first instructors at the school, which is part of the 25th Infantry Division's Lightning Academy.



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White House resists pressure, stands by wiretap claim

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House on Thursday stood by President Donald Trump's unproven accusations that his predecessor wiretapped his New York skyscraper, despite growing bipartisan agreement that there's no evidence to back up the claim and mounting pressure to retract the statement.

Angrily defending the president's statement, White House spokesman Sean Spicer told reporters Trump "stands by" the four tweets that sparked a firestorm that has threatened Trump's credibility with lawmakers. Spicer denounced reporters for taking the president's words too literally and suggested lawmakers were basing their assessments on incomplete information.

Spicer's comments were a rebuttal to the top two members of the Senate intelligence committee, who released a statement earlier Thursday declaring there is no indication that Trump Tower was "the subject of surveillance" by the U.S. government before or after the 2016 election. Spicer suggested the statement from Sens. Richard Burr, R-N.C., and Mark Warner, D-Va., was made without a full review of the evidence or, incorrectly, a briefing from the Justice Department.

"They are not findings," he said.

The standoff between the White House and lawmakers

came four days before FBI Director James Comey is slated to testify before Congress, when he will inevitably be asked whether the president's accusations are accurate. The White House's refusal to back down raised the stakes for Comey's appearance before the intelligence committee on Monday.

Trump tweeted earlier this month that President Barack Obama "was tapping my phones in October" and compared the incident to "Nixon/Watergate" and "McCarthyism."

Trump, in an interview Wednesday with Fox News, said he'd learned about the alleged wiretapping from news reports referencing intercepted communications, despite the fact that he and his advisers have publicly denounced stories about government agencies reviewing contacts between Trump associates and Russians.

Trump said there would be "some very interesting items coming to the forefront over the next two weeks."

In the two weeks since the tweets, the White House has tried to soften the statement, but not disavowed it.

Spicer on Thursday asserted that Trump meant to broadly refer to "surveillance," rather than a phone wiretap.

"The president's already been very clear that he didn't mean specifically wiretapping," he said.

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