Inside Track

Can the CIA Hack iPhones and Macs?

The WikiLeaks disclosures published March 23 detail hacks developed by the CIA to penetrate iPhones and Mac laptops. The leaks — code-named "Dark Matter" by WikiLeaks — show that the CIA had developed methods for installing surveillance malware on "factory fresh" iPhones as early as 2008.

The recent WikiLeaks dump also pointed to vulnerabilities in the firmware of Mac laptops. By exploiting those vulnerabilities, the CIA discovered ways to inject those devices with surveillance malware that was "persistent" and would remain even if the hard drive was formatted (or even replaced) and the operating system reinstalled (or even replaced).

While this deepens the rabbit hole of the CIA's hacking program, it is also fairly good news, if you read between the lines: These hacks require physical access to the devices. Also in the good-news column is the fact that this CIA hack, like others, requires unpatched vulnerabilities. While Apple claims that those vulnerabilities have been patched as of 2013, the Vault 7 release indicates that as of 2016, the CIA continued to use and update those hacking systems for Apple products, so it is possible that Apple is not aware of the full scope of vulnerabilities existing in its firmware and other proprietary software.

The take-away here is that anyone using a Mac laptop produced in 2013 or before or an older iPhone 3G can now know with certainty that those devices are vulnerable. Those with newer devices are left to wonder whether Apple has sufficiently patched those vulnerabilities or if new vulnerabilities exist.

The best course of action would be to only buy phones and computers in stores and take delivery right away. Never leave them unattended. And — most importantly — if an agent of the government (a TSA agent, for example) ever, for one second, takes one of those devices out of your sight, get rid of it. If it is a computer, remove (and destroy) the hard drive and sell the computer for parts. Buy a new computer and restore your data from the backup you should be keeping. Oh, and *encrypt everything*.

CIA Has Tools for Framing Russia, China, Others for Hacks

The third batch of "Vault 7" leaks — published by WikiLeaks March 31 — shows documented evidence that the CIA developed methods for obfuscating hacks and making it appear that the hacker was from Russia, China, North Korea, or Iran. The 676 files — code-named "Marble" — will certainly cast a shadow of doubt over claims from the past few years that certain hacks could be attributed to hackers in those countries.

Since computer forensics — like other branches of forensic science — depends on finding and analyzing clues, Marble "plants" false clues sure to be spotted by investigators and helps remove clues that would lead those investigators to accurately attribute the real source of the hack. The end result is that the computer forensicists believe they have "proof" that the hacker was foreign (for instance, Russian). And because the "traces" of the hacking tools (deliberately) left behind indicate tools too advanced to have been developed without a government-sized budget, the next leap is that the hacker was state-sponsored. At least that part is true; but he works for the CIA, not the SVR or FSB.

While these files prove that the CIA created these tools for the purpose of making its hacking appear to have been perpetrated by state-sponsored hackers from Russia, China, North Korea, or Iran, they do

not prove that the CIA ever actually used them for that purpose. Having said that, it seems beyond belief that the CIA would create (and continue to update) tools it never used for their intended purpose.

By creating these tools (and the documentation on the use of them), the CIA has turned computer forensics against itself. Now that WikiLeaks has essentially "open-sourced" the CIA's "Marble" code, there is a very real shadow of doubt hanging over every case where computer forensicists have positively attributed hacks to foreign powers. One now has to wonder if the CIA might have perpetrated those hacks, or if it might have been someone else who gained access to the obfuscation tools developed by the CIA.

Trump Vows to Tackle Common Core, Return Education to Locals

Speaking at a "CEO Business Town Hall" on April 4, President Trump praised U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos and said the process of ending Common Core was under way. "Common Core, I mean, we have to bring education more local," Trump said at the event. "We can't be managing education from Washington."

If Trump's latest comments are any indication of his plans, Common Core will eventually be dismantled. "When I go out to Iowa, when I go out to the different states and I talk, they want to run their school programs locally and they'll do a much better job," Trump continued, wondering why children were getting through school unable to read. "And I like the fact of getting rid of Common Core. You know, Common Core, to me, we have to end it. We have to bring education local, to me. I've always said it, I've been saying it during the campaign, and we're doing it."

On the campaign trail, Trump pledged unequivocally and repeatedly to kill Common Core. He cannot do it on his own, of course, but he can lead the way. The best way for Trump to kill Common Core is to simply shut down the unconstitutional U.S. Department of Education entirely — an idea he touted repeatedly on the campaign trail.

There is already a bill introduced in Congress that would do just that, H.R. 899, by the end of next year. With support from Trump, the longtime conservative goal of restoring the 10th Amendment in education could finally become a reality, sending Common Core and the Education Department to the ash heap of history's terrible and destructive schemes. But to compete against the swarms of special interests and establishment globalists hoping to federalize and globalize what today passes for "education," the American people must loudly and clearly demand an end to Fed Ed. Now, as repeatedly promised on the campaign trail, Trump should help lead the way.

Illegal Immigration Down Two-thirds From March 2016

The number of individuals caught crossing the border in March — 16,600 — was a 30-percent decrease from February and a 64-percent decrease from the same month a year ago, according to written testimony from Homeland Security Secretary John F. Kelly before a Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs hearing on April 5.

Clearly, President Trump's campaign promises to build the "big, beautiful wall" as one of many efforts to stem illegal immigration flooding into the country from Mexico turned into actions when he began signing executive orders to start the process.

U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions, during an April 11 speech in Nogales, Arizona, issued a memorandum to federal attorneys to ramp up their efforts to prosecute illegals, as well as those who harbor or assist them, with special priority given to those with criminal records and those who were previously deported. Sessions also instructed the Justice Department to pursue charges even for relatively minor infractions such as identity fraud, document theft, or forgery, as well as fraudulent marriages arranged to obtain legal immigration status.

Sessions stated, "For those [who] continue to seek improper and illegal entry into this country, be forewarned: This is a new era. This is the Trump era. The lawlessness, the abdication of the duty to enforce our immigration laws, and the 'catch-and-release' practices of old are over."

When Sessions was informed of the latest numbers from the Customs and Border Protection, he expressed surprise at how much the flow of illegals had been staunched already: "I knew strong Presidential leadership — unlike the wishy-washy-ness we've seen in the past — would impact the flow, but not as much as we've seen already. The numbers are down 70 percent since President Obama left office. So it's really a remarkable achievement."

Of course, the drop in illegal immigration could be temporary, with potential illegals waiting to see whether the words and actions of the Trump administration turn out to be effective over time. If the administration follows through on its promises, then we may see this is a continuing downtrend.

Thousands of Sex Abuse Claims Against UN "Peace" Troops

United Nations "peacekeeping" troops have faced some 2,000 allegations of rape, pedophilia, and sexual abuse of civilians in a little over a decade, according to an explosive investigation by the Associated Press released April 12.

Haiti has been especially hard hit, following many years of UN military occupation. The AP investigation reported on a child sex ring operated by 134 UN peace troops from Sri Lanka who gruesomely exploited at least nine children for years. Not a single UN child rapist was imprisoned for the ghastly crimes. Many of the victims were very young. "I did not even have breasts," said one girl, identified only as Victim Number 1 (V01). She said that between the ages of 12 and 15, she was raped by almost 50 UN peace troops, including a "Commandant" who gave her 75 cents.

The UN admitted much of it. "The evidence shows that from late 2004 to mid-October 2007, at least 134 military members of the current and previous Sri Lankan contingents sexually exploited and abused at least nine Haitian children," a private UN report obtained by AP explained. "The sexual acts described by the nine victims are simply too many to be presented exhaustively in this report, especially since each claimed multiple sexual partners at various locations where the Sri Lankan contingents were deployed throughout Haiti over several years."

The UN has interviewed some victims. One 15-year-old boy, V09, for example, was raped by over 100 UN peace troops, according to investigators. V04, a 14-year-old girl, was raped every day by a UN soldier. V02 was repeatedly raped by a UN commander. Another victim, 16 at the time, was lured to a UN compound by a UN soldier using bread with peanut butter. Once there, the UN soldier raped her at gunpoint, leaving her pregnant. "Some days, I imagine strangling my daughter to death," the girl, who is constantly in tears, said in an interview quoted by the AP. Like countless other victims, the girl never reported the rape, fearing the thought of having to see the rapist again or even being blamed for the

savage crime.

The majority of victims — likely the overwhelming majority of them — never even report the abuse, the evidence suggests. And in fact, even UN investigators and reports have documented that fact. A 2015 report by the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), for instance, found that sexual abuse by UN peace troops was "significantly under-reported." Out of 225 victims, the report found, just seven even knew about the UN's policy ostensibly prohibiting sexual exploitation and abuse, and not a single victim was aware that the UN mission had a hotline to report it, "thus demonstrating significant under-reporting."

As they have for decades, the UN's chief bureaucrats continue claiming that something is being done to rein in the swarms of barbaric child predators wearing the UN's infamous blue helmets. "We believe we are advancing in the right direction, especially with the secretary-general's new approach," claimed Atul Khare, who runs the UN department ostensibly charged with disciplining the UN's scandal-plagued military forces. "Improving the assistance provided to victims, who are at the heart of our response, is fundamental."

The situation has become so extreme and so well known that even high-ranking pro-UN members of Congress have been forced to speak out. U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Corker (R-Tenn.), for example, said that if UN troops were on their way to America, he would be on the first flight home to protect his family. Indeed, even the rabidly pro-UN globalists at the Council on Foreign Relations have acknowledged the enormity of the problem. But in typical establishment globalist fashion, CFR Global Governance Director Stewart Patrick grotesquely proposed giving the UN even more power as a solution to the crisis.

Congress has threatened to cut off funding over the growing scandal. And President Trump is also reportedly working to slash funding for the UN. But rather than trying to reform a UN that is corrupt to the core, a better solution would be to "Get U.S. Out of the UN." The American Sovereignty Restoration Act (H.R. 193) would do precisely that. All that is needed is a sufficiently large outcry by the American people. And with the UN's predatory peace troops back in the global headlines for systematically raping children, the time for that is now.