



THE MALWARE REPORT

Bad Precedent Set in Julie Amero Case for Government Employees

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Matt Grant: Hi, this is Matt Grant; you're listening to The Malware Report with Randy Abrams. Hi Randy, thanks for being here.

Randy Abrams: Hey Matt, thanks for having me back again.

Matt Grant: I wanted to revisit a topic that we chatted about a while ago, and that was the Julie Amero case, which I believe has just come to an end. I wanted to see if you could first provide our listeners with an overview of this case?

Randy Abrams: Sure, Julie Amero was a substitute teacher. And the school district in Norwich, Connecticut did as bad a job as anyone could do, without actually trying harder, at protecting school PC's. They used outdated antivirus software which they allowed to expire; they had web filtering software which they allowed to expire. They blamed an antivirus company for the expiration because they failed to pay for the software.

And then, when pop-ups that showed pornography on the computer appeared and Julie asked for help, the school district blamed her. Essentially, Norwich, Connecticut thought that Joseph Stalin wasn't bad enough and decided to try to outdo him. I think Norwich, Connecticut has an inferiority complex because Salem, Massachusetts has a worse reputation. It was a complete sham, a complete injustice. The police investigator that they hired or paid to provide testimony, his complete and total experience and expertise was saying that a link that was hardcoded, which means programmed to be red, was red because Julie clicked on it. When in fact any computer security expert knows that in the version of Windows 95 that was on the computer that Julie was given, the link would have been green if she had clicked on it. There was a huge conspiracy between the school district, the police department, and the state of Connecticut's judicial system to try to set up a substitute teacher for spyware. She was originally charged with felony counts of exposing children to pornography. Just the last week the charges were reduced to disorderly conduct; which means in the state of Connecticut, an innocent person saying they're innocent, is disorderly conduct. It's that simple. Most of Julie's supporters are very happy that the felonies got dropped, but I'm just appalled that the state of Connecticut has been the premier supporter of spyware and adware in the United States of America.

Matt Grant: When did this case originally start?

Randy Abrams: Like four years ago. It's taken them that long.

Matt Grant: The case is over, is that correct?

Randy Abrams: The case is over, it's now closed. The only continuation would be if the governor of Connecticut decided he had some integrity. He could then pardon the charges, refund the Julie the \$100 fine, which was really the tax the state of Connecticut insisted on getting for spyware from a victim. He could do that, but I don't have much hope, because

the governor of Connecticut has a track record of bravado, he likes to talk about pornography, but he doesn't like to actually do anything about it. This is actually a person, who generally politically, I agree with. But in this case, his entire state is way off base. Connecticut has come out as being the major state in the United States of America that is a proponent of adware and spyware and chooses to kick victims when they're down.

Matt Grant: Why is this important? And what lessons should we, and teachers, take from this?

Randy Abrams: The point is, an innocent teacher can be unjustly accused and convicted when the IT staff at their school is completely incompetent. And that's what happened. The IT Staff in Norwich was completely incompetent, and as a result Julie Amero suffered pop-up pornography, and for political expedience she was charged and convicted with collusion between the school district, the police department, and the state of Connecticut; it's that simple.

Matt Grant: Now was there anything she could have done or that teachers can do now to protect themselves from this sort of incident?

Randy Abrams: Yes, unplug the computer. A savvy teacher will just unplug the computer and say it's not safe to use. That's the precedent that Connecticut has set. It's just not safe for teachers to use computers in the classroom. And that's the precedent that the state of Connecticut has chosen to set, and very vociferously chosen to set.

Matt Grant: Well Randy, I definitely appreciate you bringing us up to speed with the latest on this trial and giving tips to other teachers out there. If you want to learn more about this particular topic, you can visit ESET.com where Randy has blogged on this particular case. Randy, thanks so much for being here.

[End of recorded material]