



THE MALWARE REPORT

Obama to Pick Cyber Security Czar

Participants:

Matt Grant, host

Randy Abrams, director of technical education, ESET, LLC

The Malware Report Transcript

Title: Obama to Pick Cyber Security Czar

Episode: 124

Location: http://www.eset.com/podcasts/060209_ESET_Cyber_Czar.mp3

June 4, 2009

[Begin recorded material]

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

Randy Abrams: Hey Matt. It's great to be back.

Matt Grant: I wanted to spend some time today talking about Obama's vow to prioritize cybersecurity and the announcement that was made recently regarding appointing a cybersecurity czar. Can you tell us a little more about this?

Randy Abrams: Yes, the Federal Government has a significant problem in terms of national security due to the risks of cyber attacks. The risks go well beyond actual government property because there's so much interdependency on the private sector. Obama decided to create an office – I don't really like the title Cyber Czar, which I'll explain in just a minute – the office position is for someone to coordinate and

improve cybersecurity. You can't do that in just the Department of Homeland Security, NSA or the CIA; this is going to take a broad effort across a variety of organizations. That's the crux of it – it's a huge, huge job to improve cybersecurity for the defense of the nation.

Matt Grant: Absolutely. I know ESET recently did a poll that showed more than 65% of U.S. residents want more involvement from the government to help protect against cybercrime. Is this going along with that statistic and is it enough or is this at least the first step in the right direction?

Randy Abrams: It's a first step in the right direction definitely. The reason I don't like the title Cyber Security Czar is because people are going to say this failed because they didn't define what works properly. There's no such thing as a Czar in cyberspace. The connotation is some all powerful guy that controls cyberspace, like the Czar controlled Russia. This is going to be a beleaguered cybersecurity coordinator who, the right person can probably get a whole bunch done. If people think there's someone who controls the Internet throughout the world, they're going to say he's a failure and it's not a fair expectation to put upon him.

Matt Grant: In your opinion, when this person is appointed, what should their number one priority be?

Randy Abrams: They're not going to be able to take a number one priority; they'll have to spearhead multiple fronts. One of those things is going to be looking at federal assets. If you don't know what you have, you can't protect it – end of story. They're going to have to know what they have to protect. Another thing to look at is education and they're going to need to look at education all the way from the people maintaining the network to home users. When it comes down to it, there isn't a single government employee or business the government outsources to whose employees aren't home users – you just can't ignore the home user. Education and identification of resources are two of the big areas. They're going to have to look at things like supply chain – where is the

hardware actually coming from and can they trust that this hardware is safe to use.

Matt Grant: From what you've seen today, do you think President Obama understands the severity of cybercrime and the resources needed to combat this threat?

Randy Abrams: I have no doubt he understands, but the other problem is going to be getting the Congress to unite in solving a problem. Throughout the decades we've had a lot of problems that partisan politics have prevented solutions to because someone didn't want someone else to look good or someone will only approve funding if they get to give racehorse owners money; things like that. I think Obama understands the problem, but it's going to be if Congress has the will to work on the problem.

Matt Grant: Right. Now, have you heard any rumors of who this quote, unquote "Czar" might be?

Randy Abrams: I don't pay attention to any of the rumors. I don't remember any of the names off hand; I'm sure several names were floated around. I think Obama surprised some people in the past with some of the positions he's chosen. I think we'll wait and see, he might pull someone out who might be a complete surprise, but perfectly competent; it's hard to say.

Matt Grant: Absolutely. This is definitely the step in the right direction and it'll be interesting to see who he appoints. We certainly appreciate your opinion on this topic and hopefully we can chat again once that person is appointed and continue to discuss this topic. If you would like a list of sites or have additional questions, you can ask Randy at askeset@eset.com. This has been Matt Grant and you're listening to the Malware report.

[End of recorded material]