

Global Data & Privacy Update

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German airlines face ban from landing in Britain

Urgent talks are currently in progress between Berlin and London in an attempt to persuade the German government to relax data protection laws prohibiting advanced passenger lists being provided. A failure to do so will see German airlines being banned from landing in Britain. The move comes as part of preparations for the package of counter-terrorism legislation, due to be introduced later this month, designed to stop the flow of fighters to and from Syria and Iraq. The US already enforces a ban on airlines that refuse to provide advanced passenger lists on transatlantic flights.

ICO warns organisations to avoid 'oldest hackers' trick in the book'

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) warned organisations last week that they must ensure their websites are protected against one of the most common forms of online attack, known as SQL injection, where malicious code is inserted into a data entry field on a website for execution. The ICO warning follows a GBP 7,500 fine levied on the hotel booking website Worldview Limited for a serious data breach which had allowed hackers to access the full payment card details of 3,814 customers.

Latest cyber-attack: US Postal Service

The US Postal Service (USPS) has confirmed that it was the victim of a cyber-attack, said to have compromised the personal information of over 800,000 employees and possibly also data on customers who contacted its call centre this year. The employee data reportedly includes names, dates of birth, addresses and Social Security numbers. The USPS have stated that the "intrusion is limited in scope and all operations of the Postal Service are functioning normally".

China builds world's most secure computer network

China is building a GBP 60 million fibre-optic cable between Beijing and Shanghai which will transmit quantum encryption keys and has been said to be impenetrable by hackers. The cable should be finished in two years' time and will initially be used for money transfers by ICBC, the world's largest bank. Prof Pan Jianwei, a quantum physicist who is leading the project, has said that he is "inviting the finest hackers to attack our system".

EPIC prevail in ruling against FBI's Facial-Recognition Technology

A federal judge has ruled that the FBI's facial-recognition database is deserving of scrutiny from open-government advocates due to the size and scope of the surveillance technology. The U.S. District Judge added that concerns regarding its potential impact on privacy rights meant that the bureau's Next Generation Identification program represented a "significant public interest". The ruling validated a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit filed by the Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC) and awarded the group nearly USD 20,000 in legal fees.

Copy and paste leads to Australian Immigration Department privacy breach

The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) found that the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) breached the Australian Privacy Act by publishing the details of approximately 9,250 asylum seekers on its website in February. The breach was caused by an employee copying and pasting a chart containing the details from Microsoft Excel to Microsoft Word, thus embedding information in the Word document. Timothy Pilgrim, the Australian Privacy Commissioner, noted that the breach may not have happened had the DIBP properly trained employees on the risks of embedded data.

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