StealthGenie Case Study

Incident

In today’s technology centered society, infidelity and teenage cellular usage at an all-time high. One man took advantage of the ever changing idea of loyalty and monogamy and with the decreasing age of the cell phone user. This man is 31 year old Hammad Akbar. Akbar is the CEO of InvoCode Pvt Ltd, the company that advertises and sells StealthGenie online based in Lahore, Pakistan, where the CEO is from. StealthGenie also had a second headquarters in Virginia. StealthGenie is application used to monitor all activities on smartphones running Android, IOS and even Blackberry.

What Happened?

Hammad Akbar was indicted in the Eastern District of Virginia in late September for allegedly conspiring to advertise and sell StealthGenie, a spyware application (app) that could monitor calls, texts, videos and other communications on mobile phones without detection. StealthGenie allows for the reading of incoming and outgoing text messages, viewing of call logs, access to emails, GPS location tracking, spying on instant messenger chats, remotely monitoring their phone, and listening in on their live calls. StealthGenie was first introduced to the world in 2011 and has been monitoring children, spouses and employees since. This is the first case surrounding the sale and advertisement of mobile spyware.
Since Akbar’s indictment the StealthGenie website has been taken down and users no longer have access to site content, customer service for refunds or any “official” StealthGenie content however a the official YouTube account is still active showing usage and reviews of StealthGenie.

**What is StealthGenie?**

StealthGenie is a “cell phone spy package for monitoring all activities on smartphones running Android, iOS (iPhone) or BlackBerry” (StealthGenie Review). It is marketed towards users harboring insecurities within their relationships or parents looking to monitor their children’s activities. For only $60, With this application you will be able to read incoming and outgoing text messages, view call logs, read emails, track GPS location, spy on instant messenger chats, remotely monitor their phone, and listen in on their live calls.

StealthGenie works in stealth mode so that the device owner will never know that he/she is being monitored. After around 10 minutes of uninterrupted interaction with the “victim’s” device, the application is ready to go. The application is not available for download from the app store but instead a StealthGenie website link which will download the application after entering your payment code.

When purchasing the application there are various packages for purchase. These packages include basic, gold or platinum. The basic package includes items considered entry level features which include the reading of text messages and call logs. The gold package has all the features found in the Basic package, plus access to reading emails, viewing photos, and basic alerts. The platinum package and most expensive gives users everything in the Basic and Gold package, plus the more advanced features. These features include spying on instant messengers, tracking without GPS, call recording, triggers/alerts on nearly everything being monitored, view videos stored in the phone. The platinum package also includes the recording and listening of live calls, recording of the victims surroundings,
access to the internet browsing history, send remote commands, wipe data, pause operations, lock, or launch an app on the target phone.

Who was affected?

This case is unusual because the charges have been brought against the creator of the app rather than the users. The government believes that since Akbar is the maker of this application he is an enabler of this privacy invasion and is potentially liable.

StealthGenie boasted to having more than 100,000 users, users who could potentially face criminal charges in the near future.

Analysis

From this incident users can learn that although a cell phone can be a convenient tool to have it can also be one that makes the user completely vulnerable to the world around them. This instance boils down to a user being able to essentially step into the shoes of their victim. Not only can they see location and time information, where they go and where they have been, they have the ability to read messages and emails as if they had the device in the palm of their hands. This application, if in the wrong hands, can be potentially dangerous. Who know what may happen when an enraged lover finds out that there spouse is indeed cheating, fatal attractions are not uncommon.

Although this is a step in the right direction, StealthGenie is not the only application of its kind. M Spy, Spybubble, MobiStealth and MobileSpy are just a few paid applications that perform essentially the same functions as StealthGenie. However, these applications are still up for purchase. Many are saying that this will only be the first incident in a string of many to come.
Why Did This Happen?

This happened because mobile devices have opened up a whole new world of communication. No longer is a phone call or snail mail the only means to communicate without being face to face. With these new found methods of communication conversations are more private and now a part of everyday life. These new method have provided more ways for lovers to secretly communicate as well as more areas that parents must be concerned about. There is always a sense of curiosity that lingers surrounding who our child or spouse is talking and what they are talking about. This application plays up that curiosity and makes it possible to wonder no longer and worry, which is why this application is appealing.

Future Preventions

This is not the first application of its kind and it will definitely not be the last. “Groups like the National Network to End Domestic Violence say they hope the indictment signals more aggressive efforts by the government to crack down on those who distribute tools that, more than a privacy invasion, are often used by stalkers and perpetrators of domestic violence to track their victims “(Zetter, 2014).

In order to fully ensure the privacy of individuals the government will need to continue a crackdown on apps that continually infringe on a user’s privacy. However, if a user feels that they are being spied on or watched via mobile spyware a factory reset on their device should be performed. To avoid being a victim of spyware, users should also avoid leaving their device unattended or in the hands of another individual.
Works Cited


