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Debian Is Owned By The NSA « IgnorantGuru's Blog

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5-6 minutes

Julian Assange: Debian Is Owned By The NSA

In his Q&A to his keynote address at the World Hosting Days Global 2014 conference in April, the world's largest hosting and cloud event, Julian Assange discussed encryption technology in the context of hosting systems. He discussed the cypherpunk credo of how encryption can level the playing field between powerful governments and people, and about 20 minutes into his address, he discussed how UNIX-like systems like Debian (which he mentioned by name) are engineered by nation-states with backdoors which are easily introduced as 'bugs', and how the Linux system depends on thousands of packages and libraries that may be compromised.

I recommend watching [his 36 minute Q&A](#) in its entirety, keeping in mind my recent warnings about how GNU/Linux is almost entirely engineered by the government/military-

affiliated Red Hat corporation.

The Voice of Russia website has [an article](#) on Assange's address with a few quotes:

“To a degree this is a matter of national sovereignty. The news is all flush with talk about how Russia has annexed the Crimea, but the reality is, the Five Eyes intelligence alliance, principally the United States, have annexed the whole world as a result of annexing the computer systems and communications technology that is used to run the modern world,” stated Julian Assange in his keynote address...

Don't just read the short article, listen to the address yourself, because Assange goes into many areas, and the work being done in these fields.

Assange mentions how Debian famously botched the SSH random number generator for years (which was clearly sabotaged). Speaking of botched security affecting Red Hat, Debian, Ubuntu, Gentoo, SuSE, *BSD, and more, the nightmarish OpenSSL recently [botched SSL again](#) (**very serious** – [updated comments](#) on how a defense contractor in Finland outed the NSA here?) It's very hard to believe this wasn't deliberate, as botching the memory space of private keys is about as completely incompetent as you can get, as this area is ultra-critical to the whole system. As a result, many private keys, including of providers, were potentially compromised, and much private info of service users. Be sure to update your systems as this bug is now public knowledge.

(For more on how OpenSSL is a nightmare, and why this bug is one among many that will never be found, listen to [FreeBSD developer Poul-Heening Kamp's excellent talk at the FOSDEM BSD conference](#).)

From the start, my revelations on this blog about Red Hat's deep control of Linux, along with their large corporate/government connections, hasn't been just about spying, but about losing the distributed engineering quality of Linux, with Red Hat centralizing control. Yet as an ex-cypherpunk and crypto software developer, as soon as I started using Linux years ago, I noted that all the major distributions used watered-down encryption (to use stronger encryption in many areas, such as AES-loop, you needed to compile your own kernel and go to great lengths to manually bypass barriers they put in place to the use of genuinely strong encryption). This told me then that those who controlled distributions were deeply in the pockets of intelligence networks. So it comes as no surprise to me that they jumped on board systemd when told to, despite the mock choice publicized to users – there was never any option.

A computer, and especially hosting services (which often run Linux), are powerful communication and broadcasting systems into today's world. If you control and have unfettered access to such systems, you basically control the world. As Assange notes in the talk, encryption is only as strong as its endpoints. eg if you're running a very secure protocol on a system with a

compromised OS, you're owned.

As Assange observed:

“The sharing of information, the communication of free peoples, across history and across geography, is something that creates, maintains, and disciplines laws [governments].”

UPDATE: Wikileaks is [officially denying](#) that Julian Assange literally said “Debian Is Owned By The NSA”. For people who are choking on the mere *summary* title of this article, please see definition of [Owned/Pwn](#) (and get some hip!)

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(second half details Red Hat's involvement in Linux)

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