

# Asia, U.S. high on spam-relaying report

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Asia has the worst record for helping to relay spam, according to a new report from a computer threat solution management firm. Abingdon, U.K.-based company Sophos released a report Thursday that looks at "spam relaying" in the first quarter of 2006.

While Asia was the top continent in terms of spam, the United States was revealed to be the worst country in terms of having spam sent from it, despite increasing efforts to negate the problem.

Rounding off the top 12 after the United States were China (including Hong Kong), South Korea, France, Poland, Spain, Germany, Brazil, Japan, United Kingdom, Netherlands and Taiwan.

According to a statement from Graham Cluley, senior technology consultant for Sophos, two years ago the United States had accounted for

over half of all spam sent worldwide, but that has been reduced to less than one-quarter due to more consumers becoming aware of the problem.

This also means helpful legislation including the CAN-SPAM act, awareness shared by Internet service providers and imposing severe penalties and fines on prolific spammers, the company stated.

Among those prolific spam cases in the first quarter included several cyber-gang members like Jennifer Clason of New Hampshire, Andrew Ellifson of Arizona and Kirk Rogers of California of a gang that spammed out millions of e-mails advertising graphic hardcore pornography sites.

Some 600,000 complaints from AOL users had criticized spam messages promoting adult content that had allegedly been sent by the defendants in their international spamming operation.

A 33-year-old mother, Clason was the third-ever conviction related to the transmission of obscene e-mails, according to the Department of Justice in March 2006.

Clason plead guilty in federal court in Phoenix to two counts of violating the CAN-SPAM Act, and one of criminal conspiracy for conspiring with Jeffrey A. Kilbride and James R. Schaffer who had created overseas companies The Compliance Company and Ganymede Marketing to conceal and disguise their activities as well as overseas bank accounts to purposes of the operation, DOJ stated.

Clason forfeited money obtained in the commission of the crime and faces a maximum penalty of five years in person for each offense.

Cluley warned that further needs to be done as "more and more viruses,

worms and Trojan horses are being designed to take over personal computers with the intention of stealing information and sending out junk email campaigns.

The Sophos report also indicated that Europe could overtake North America ranking second in continents in spam relying behind Asia.

"Europe is in danger of overtaking North America as the second worst spam-relaying part of the world. This continental shift is inevitable because as North America's percentage continues to fall, the rest of the world is witnessing a rise," Cluley said. "It's imperative that computer users worldwide put better defenses in place to prevent their computers from being converted into spam-spewing zombies."

Sophos advises consumers to use updated anti-virus software, a properly configured firewall, and install latest operating system security patches while businesses should implement a best-practice policy regarding e-mail account usage.

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