Surveillance company loses control of flagship spy program

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Italian surveillance company Hacking Team said Wednesday that it had lost control of its custom-built spy software, unleashing a new threat onto the Internet and depriving the company of its top selling point.

In a statement, Hacking Team said it believed anyone could now deploy its RCS software "against any target of their choice."

"We believe this is an extremely dangerous situation," the company said.

Hacking Team's statement is confirmation that its program's source code was in the mountain of data pilfered when the company was breached Sunday night. That means that the program—once limited to paying customers—is available to just about anyone who can pick it up and knows how to use it.

Although all malicious programs are potentially dangerous, the bigger threat is likely to be to Hacking Team itself. Its once-secret program was the centerpiece of surveillance packages that could fetch hundreds of thousands of dollars. Anti-virus firms can now easily pick up on the program, forcing "virtually all" of Hacking Team's clients to suspend their operations, the company statement said.

Meanwhile software maker Adobe Systems Inc. says it is hoping to fix a critical flaw in its Flash Player program which was revealed when RCS became public.

A patch is expected later Wednesday.

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