Israeli army identifies a new threat: 'Pokemon Go'

August 1 2016, by Daniel Estrin

The Israeli military is warning its soldiers about a new threat: the widely popular mobile phone game "Pokemon Go."

The army said Monday it has banned its forces from playing the game on Israeli military bases due to security concerns. In a directive to soldiers and officers, the army warned the game activates cell phone cameras and location services, and could leak sensitive information like army base locations and photographs of the bases.

The military is also concerned that soldiers could download a fake application that impersonates "Pokemon Go" but could leak information from soldiers' phones.

"Pokemon Go" players roam streets and buildings holding up their mobile phones and following a digital map to catch creatures that appear on the screen.

Israeli civilians are also being warned about the perils of chasing Pikachu and other digital critters in the game.

The Israel Cancer Association has advised players not to go outdoors to catch Pokemon creatures in the middle of the day to avoid excessive sun exposure, and other tips to protect oneself from the sun's rays.

"In the game itself, some of the Pokemon snatchers are always with a baseball hat on," the association said on its website. "In the real world

too, make sure you wear a hat before going outdoors."

The AIG insurance company in Israel is taking advantage of the Pokemon craze to market its personal accident insurance policy that covers accidents caused while playing such mobile phone games. Yifat Reiter of AIG said the company has received dozens of inquiries about the accident insurance for Pokemon players.

Israel's emergency rescue service Magen David Adom said distracted Pokemon players have suffered moderate injuries.

Last week, a 15-year-old girl suffered a head injury after she fell off her bicycle while pursuing Pokemon creatures, and a 35-year-old player ran into a glass door and suffered "massive bleeding" in his legs, Magen David Adom said in a statement on its website.

"Apparently the game is not as friendly as we thought," the statement said.

For Palestinians, "Pokemon Go" is a frustrating game to play, because mobile high-speed internet services don't exist in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Under interim peace accords, Israel controls wireless networks in the area, and Israel only recently announced that it would allow high-speed internet access in the West Bank, though the technology has not yet gone into effect.

The Palestinians are among a few markets in the world that still use older 2G technology, according to the International Telecommunication Union, a U.N. agency.

Naim Samsoum, 26, a Gaza-based animator, was one of the first people in the territory to download the game. He said he managed to catch three Pokemons only after installing a costly 2G internet service from the only

mobile service provider in Gaza.

"I stopped because it was very expensive for me," Samsoum said.

He ran into another obstacle: the fourth Pokemon he wanted to catch was located on the premises of the Palestinian Legislative Council, an off-limits government building run by Hamas, the Islamic militant group that controls Gaza.

Citation: Israeli army identifies a new threat: 'Pokemon Go' (2016, August 1) retrieved 29 April 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2016-08-israeli-army-soldiers-pokemon-bases.html