Foreign hardware could be designed to launch cyber attacks against US companies and consumers

July 11 2011, by Katie Gatto

(PhysOrg.com) -- A security official at the Department of Homeland Security recently released a statement that confirmed the idea that some foreign-made computer components are actually being designed to make the job of launching a cyber attack against a U.S. company or consumer easier to do.

While no one at the Department of Homeland Security has been willing to give information about what countries or specific components are in question, or by what methods these components could have been made in order to make cyber attacks easier the department did confirm that this has happened in the past. Greg Schaffer, the Acting Deputy Undersecretary National Protection and Programs Director said, "I am aware of instances where that has happened."

This comment, which confirms that the US government is currently aware of the issue, though the admission only came after a questioning from Rep. Jason Chaffetz, a republican from Utah, during a House Oversight and Government Reform Committee hearing.

How could an attack like this happen? In one scenario a device could be tampered with prior to its distribution in order to carry, or work as a Trojan Horse, and allow other malicious software to make its way onto the hardware unfettered. Previously the FBI has been investigating a case where counterfeit versions of Cisco routers were being sold to

government agencies. These attacks can be potentially devastating because it can go unnoticed for many months or years while the code silently listens for information such a billing information or trade secrets .

While many nations are involved in the supply chain of computer hardware no specific nation has been accused or mentioned as a part of this problem.

© 2010 PhysOrg.com

Citation: Foreign hardware could be designed to launch cyber attacks against US companies and consumers (2011, July 11) retrieved 25 April 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2011-07-foreign-hardware-cyber-companies-consumers.html

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.