

DARPA Shredder Challenge sizzling but no winner yet

November 22 2011, by Nancy Owano



(PhysOrg.com) -- With only days left until the December 4 [Shredder Challenge](#) deadline, DARPA is still asking the sharpest-minded computer scientists and simply the curious if anyone among them has the skills to reconstruct shredded documents and solve DARPA's five puzzles? There are five separate puzzles in which the number of documents, the document subject matter and the method of shredding are varied and present increasing difficulty.

With a tantalizing payoff of up to \$50,000, DARPA says that the final

and toughest #5 puzzle remains unsolved. Translation: No winners yet, and the clock is ticking.

DARPA finds that the lack of a winner cannot be passed off as lack of interest. The contest participation has actually been high, with over 8,200 registrations for participation and 72,000 puzzle downloads.

“No team has yet been able to put together the right combination of automation, collaboration and persistence to piece together the fifth shredded document,” according to DARPA.

Over 50 teams managed to solve at least one puzzle, and one team completely solved the fourth puzzle. The first two problems contained 224 and 373 pieces to solve and puzzle 3 had teams sorting and reassembling 1,115 pieces of paper. A tougher puzzle 4 had 2,340 pieces and puzzle 5 has 6,068 pieces.

Never say never, however. The team that can walk off with the cash might be a Twitter away. According to DARPA news updates, one of the top five teams is moving rapidly up the leaderboard. The team recently mobilized a crowd with clever software, which can't hurt, to unravel the six thousand-plus pieces.

To complete each problem, participants must provide the answer to a puzzle embedded in the content of the reconstructed document.

[DARPA](#) is to announce the winner the week of December 5, once final results are calculated.

Puzzle 1 asks, What is the appropriate title being referenced? Puzzle 2 asks, What is the deciphered message? Puzzle 3 asks, What is the indicated location? Puzzle 4 asks, What are the names and/or initials of the collaborators?

The ornery [Puzzle 5](#) asks, What are the three translated message fragments?

Every workday morning, submissions are graded if received before 7:30 AM Eastern. The leaderboard is updated after grading. On weekends, submissions are graded once and the leaderboard is updated by noon on Sunday.

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