

Hackers can take control of voting machines in the US in less than 2 hours

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Here, Carsten Schürmann, an associate professor of Copenhagen University of Technology successfully penetrated a server that voted, Advanced Voting Solutions' 2000 WinVote, via a WiFi system after nearly an hour and a half. After exploiting a security vulnerability on Windows XP operating system since 2003, Carsten Schürmann was able to control this voting system remotely.



After the Russian hackers attacked several states in the 2016 Presidential election, managers began to care about election technology in the United States. In order to serve the Defcon conference, about 30 votes were cast (the numbers of those machines were not disclosed).

Months before the conference, many serious vulnerabilities in WinVote were discovered by Synack, a security company in San Francisco. This group simply plugs the mouse and keyboard into the machine and clicks the "control-alt-delete" key combination that can pass the voting software.

Jay Kaplan, co-founder of Synack, said they only need to plug in the USB and perform a simple operation for 3 seconds to cause the system to be compromised, even hijacking and controlling the remote computer.

Synack also used a mobile application to crack the device by installing a remote control program inside the device. Even, Synack once installed and played Minesweeper (mine detection) game on the voting machine.

According to Anne-Marie Hwang, an intern at Synack, changing votes is as easy as updating documents on Microsoft Excel.

With the findings at this conference, security experts hope to make the government care and offer solutions for voting machines that are too old.

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