TEK THOTS
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Published irregularly by Scott C. Holstad

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News/Editorial
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*   Welcome to a new year of Tek Thots! I've taken a little longer with this issue,
because of the holidays. A lot has taken place in the world of technology over the past few
weeks -- far more than I can discuss in this issue. Thus, I s'pose I'll have to be somewhat
selective in terms of what I cover.

*   How about a little more Internet insanity (and for once, it's not coming from the
U.S.). A French organization called Defense of the French Language is suing Georgia
Tech University. Why, you ask? Because this French-based mini-campus (part of Georgia
Tech) comprised of English-speaking professors and students (most, if not all of whom
are American) has a Web site which is only in English!!! *GASP* The gall. Imagine
that? I, for one, was not aware of linguistic obligations when putting up Web sites.

Should all foreign US-based sites also be in English? With this logic, should not ALL Web sites be multi-lingual? Interesting that the French Prime Minister has a Web site (http://www.premier-ministre.gouv.fr./) which is available, not only in French, but English, Spanish, and German. Shouldn't the Dutch feel slighted? How about Swahili-speakers? The Japanese?

My point is not to go overboard criticizing the French, but to show the idiocy of such lawsuits. Why, that's almost as crazy as holding international sites accountable to local American laws (i.e., Memphis);)

*   Most of you know I rant about spam. Here's a copy of yet another piece of junk I got:

From: sch@well.com
X-Sender: sch@mail.well.com
Mime-Version: 1.0
Date: Sun, 05 Jan 1997 12:24:01 -0800
To: sholstad@earthlink.net
Subject: Hi,

>Return-Path: gail@mail.davenda.com
>Comments: Authenticated sender is <sam@mail.davenda.com>
>From: "gail@mail.davenda.com" <gail@mail.davenda.com>
>To: sam@mail.davenda.com
>Date: Fri, 3 Jan 1997 18:08:46 +0000
>Subject: Hi,
>Reply-to: sam@mail.davenda.com
>Priority: normal
>
>Hi,
>
>Check out this awesome web site. You'll love it.
>
>See you there:
>
>http://www.seductress.com
>
>Love,
>Erin
>
>
>Warning: You must be over 21 to enter the commercial site referenced
>in this message. This message is being sent to interested consumers
>know of the availability of this site to paying adult customers only.
>We hope to improve our future communications with your help. If you
>do not wish, for any reason, to continue to be on the e-mail
>distribution list that resulted in this message being sent to you,
>simply send an e-mail reply with your e-mail address and the message

>"please remove me from your e-mail distribution list." Thank you.
>

For those of you sickened by such annoyances, feel free to write the wonderful people at Davenda.com:

davenda.com
David Wilgar
dwilgar@atlantis.net
The Projects
4506 Hayes Place
Las Vegas, NV 89117
702-878-7975

Perhaps Dave will be less inclined to send or allow spam to be sent from his domain if we all write to complain....

*   Tek Thots reader Mike Brown (msbrown@earthlink.net) provides this thot:

The dinosaurs at Slate have missed the boat again:

Dear Reader,

SLATE goes shopping on the Internet this week. Amazon.com, one of the Web's hottest sites, bills itself as "Earth's Biggest Bookstore." It promises speed, selection, and prices unmatched by traditional booksellers. No chance. In "Amazon.Con," Jonathan Chait and Stephen Glass expose the demerits of the virtual bookstore.
http://www.slate.com/Features/amazon/amazon.asp

But never fear, I and -- at last count -- 148 other true (amazon.com) believers let them know how stupid they are by writing in to "The Fray", Slate's rather good reader-response forum.

Just what are Kingsley and crew thinking? They're not http://www.suck.com ; nor are they cool enough to say over and over again that the Web is useless and still have readers that come back day after day to read their stuff!

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*   I recently wrote an article on offline Web readers (http://www.earthlink.net/daily/friday/offline/). During my research/testing phase, I downloaded Mac and PC versions of Freeloader and GrabNet, both by the same company. In order to download eval copies, I had to fill out a form. Unfortunately, I was stupid enough to provide accurate information. Shortly thereafter, I received phone calls for

EACH of these products from salespeople, trying to talk me into buying full copies. Even more outrageous, if I wasn't in, they left messages stating that they wanted to talk to me about "my Internet connection." The only reason I returned the first call was cause I was interested in what these people had to say about my connection -- it's a direct connection. I was mortified to find out the real purpose of their call. ForeFront may make good products, but they've got a sleazy sales team.

* AOL 4.0 (Casablanca) looks to be an improvement, with over 100 new features. These include instant messaging, an integrated IE3 browser, and extensions which will support Shockwave, RealAudio, QuickTime, FutureSplash and more. Sounds like they're getting serious. Now if only they get all of the customers online successfully....

* Online scam alert: both AOL and Prodigy have responded to recent scams. AOL completely shut off Russian AOL access after finding indications that Russian gangsters were using up mega-hours via stolen passwords and credit cards. The Prodigy scam's a little more priceless. Someone actually set up an 800 number for Prodigy members to call. Why would they call? Because this person sent instant messages to members telling them something was wrong with their billing info, and to call the 800 number. When they called, they got a message telling them to leave their name, password, credit card number, etc., and everything would be fixed. Sheesh -- that's ballsy! And they still haven't caught the person! People -- don't go around giving out your billing info, especially if you get instant messages. Look into it first; that's just common sense.

* The IAHC's (International Ad Hoc Committee) first draft (Draft Specifications for Administration and Management of TLD) regarding reworking the Domain Name system has been getting a lot of heat. It centers around a system which would set up seven new domains, add as many as 30 new registrars, add a lottery system to pick the new registrars, and add a 60 day waiting period on the use of newly registered domain names. Critics are screaming that this is a big-corporation proposal, and that Domain Names=Trademarks. I haven't gotten to read through the whole spec yet, but a final version is due January 17. It'll be interesting to see what happens.

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PC Thots
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* I downloaded the new alpha (ok, it's supposed to be a beta) of Netscape Communicator as soon as it was released (as I'm sure many of you did). What do the readers think about it? I like the re-vamped toolbar, as well as the floating toolbar. The backward/forward buttons now have ToolTips that tell you which URL you'll go to, rather than just displaying Back or Forward. The mail client seems better (the three pane interface is gone), although I remain partial to Eudora. The editor seems to be, well, an editor -- specifically, an updated version of Navigator Gold. And every time I attempted to open the News client, it froze. In fact, I'm not sure it's enabled yet. Finally, the whole thing crashes

way too much. Such is the life of an alpha, I s'pose. On the whole, though, I think the final version may be an nice advancement over 3.0. Your thoughts?

*   Intel is trying to trademark the name "MMX." Cyrix is especially irritated over this, as they've already struck some licsencing deals. They're claiming that MMX is a descriptive industry-standard term. As they, AMD, and the others have MMX plans, it'll be interesting to see how things pan out.

*   Canon is getting out of the PC business, announcing they'll discontinue their Innova PC over the next few months. However, they're going to begin making silicon wafers, sinking a whole $26 million into wafer production. (Wow. 26 whole million dollars....) ;)

*   Borland's put a preview copy of their new "Delphi for C++," otherwise (and officially) known as C++ Builder out at their Web site. New features include a new, optimizing 32-bit native code compiler based on the Borland C++ compiler. There's also an incremental linker, and a fully integrated editor and debugger. Delphi's interface on top of C++....

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Mac Thots
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*   Not too surprisingly, Apple is once again expected to post huge losses -- up to $150 million! And, that doesn't even take into account the costs accrued by the Next acquisition. Aside from gross corporate ineptitude, why the big loss after last quarter's gains? Crappy Performa sales and not enough Power Books to meet demand. Oh yeah, what about the head honchos over there pulling down $3 mil.... If I could make $3 million for failing, I guess I wouldn't feel much inclination to excel either. Frankly, the company makes a decent product, and it could once again succeed. Maybe one of the first things they should concentrate on, though, is improvement their credibility -- it seems to be floundering, as far as I'm concerned.

*   Tek Thots conspirator Marcy Harbut (mharbut@earthlink.net) gives us a few Mac tidbits following on the trail of MacWorld. (If you're interested in more, check out her article, "How Do You Like Them Apples?" at http://www.earthlink.net/daily/weekend/macupdate/).

Last week during MacWorld Expo in San Francisco, Apple execs finally answered some of the questions that have been on many people's minds since the company announced it was buying Steve Jobs's company, NeXT, and its operating system NeXTStep.

Although you could talk and speculate until you're blue in the face about the latest developments from Cupertino, I've narrowed it down to a few basics facts that will hopefully shore up any confusion.

Okay, here's the deal:

- Apple will continue to release updates to System 7 through mid-1998 while developing the first generation of the NeXT-Macintosh hybrid, code-named Rhapsody. Sometime around mid- to late-1998, the new Apple computers will have both the old Mac OS and Rhapsody, so they'll be fully backwards compatible.

- Although the new OS will be able to run software made for the old OS, machines like the Quadra, Performa, PowerBook, and older PowerPCs will not be able to run the new Rhapsody software.

- There is speculation that because the NeXT computers run on Intel's chip, the new Macs may be able to run on a PC platform. Apple hasn't confirmed this one way or another, but if they plan to recapture its shrinking hardware market, they should seriously consider this idea.

These are trying times for Mac users. MacWorld Expo's pep rally atmosphere and pro-Mac hip-hip-hoorays are no doubt giving Mac supporters something to feel good about, and not a moment too soon. But you have to be realistic. Does anyone -- particularly investors -- really believe that Apple will stick with this game plan, given its track record? We'll just have hold our breath and wait and see.

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Web Development Thots

Nothing for this issue. Maybe I just haven't seen anything which piques my interest....

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This Issue's Plug-in
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*   Digital Dreams has released an interesting sounding Mac plug-in called ShockTalk (http://www.surftalk.com/shocktalk/index.html). It utilizes Apple's speech recognition technology to enable Webmasters to create sites that can be navigated via spoken commands. ShockTalk also enables Macromedia Director developers to create Shockwave movies that prompt the viewer for spoken information. Sounds very cool, and I honestly haven't had a chance to try it out. Feel free to pass on your views about it if you give it a whirl.

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This Issue's ActiveX Control
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*   The V-Active ActiveX Control (http://www.ephyx.com/dnload/vactivx.zip) enables you to experience interactive, hyperlinked video on the Net. Video objects, defined in the interactive movie, can be linked to all kinds of Internet resources, such as Web URLs, FTP addresses, or mail. Might be worth a look-see.

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Stock Thots
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*   Last week, Wired raised a little over $21 million from some unnamed investors, in effect giving them minority stake in the company. I'm not sure what to make of this. Wired's attempted IPO failed last October, as I predicted it would. After losing $3.3 million during the first nine months of '95, they lost over $42 million during the first nine months of '96. Even with this dire financial news, people are sinking cash into the company. Why? Evidently because Hotwired's traffic saw in increase of over 50% from the third to fourth quarter, and Wired's circulation has increased by 13%....

*   I know this sort of thing happens, but I still found it fairly stunning that Netscape lost nearly one fifth of its stock value in one day, solely because Deutsche Morgan Grenfell's J. William Gurley cut his rating to an accumulate from a buy....

*   Some of the better '96 IPOs:
    - Sykes Enterprises (SYKE): Open -- 18   End -- 40.75
    - Sipex (SIPX):   Open -- 9.50 End -- 32.50
    - Whittman-Hart (WHIT):   Open -- 16   End -- 23.125

    Some of the poor (well, ok, the worst) '96 IPOs:
    - n-Vision (NVSN):   Open -- 5   End -- 0.563
    - VocalTec (VOCLF):   Open -- 19   End -- 6.25
    - CompuServe (CSRV):   Open -- 30   End -- 10.25

(Source: Securities Data)

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Game Thots
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*   Eugene Ridenour, EarthLink's Gamemaster, provides this issue's PC and Mac game.

"It is the year 2066. Pollution has rendered the planet barely livable. A crack team of scientists has created and launched a satellite called the Ceres Project. Onboard Ceres is a the world's first practical application of nanotechnology. The nanotech system detects hot-spots in the atmosphere and sends cellular-sized robots to interact with the toxins and neutralize them."

You can find Obsidian at http://www.segasoft.com/obsidian/main.html.

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Newbie Thot
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*   I remember "way back" when I got on the Internet, I was overwhelmed with terms, acronyms, etc. I could read news, send email, eventually do the Web, but I wanted in to libraries, so I could check out the contents of the card catalogs. I wanted into various government databases (Hey, the Library of Congress hasn't been on the Web all that long, you know?). I quickly discovered I needed a "telnet" application. Well, what the heck was that?

I recently wrote an online article explaining just that. You can find "The Art of Telnet" at http://www.earthlink.net/daily/tuesday/telnet/. In it, you'll find out what telnet is, what you can do with it, and how to find and configure popular Mac/PC telnet programs. Check it out.

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Privacy/Security Thots
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*   Wow! Is this a good one. I could barely stop laughing when I read this. In the December issue of the FBI's Law Enforcement Bulletin (http://www.fbi.gov/leb/12_96leb.htm), two PhD's named David L. Carter and Andra J. Katz produce a pseudo-"scientific" article entitled "Computer Crime: An Emerging Challenge for Law Enforcement." One of the topics they cover is computer viruses. Here's the beauty:

" To illustrate, several new insidious viruses have been found.

> "Gingrich" randomly converts word processing files into legalese often found in contracts. Victims can combat this virus by typing their names at the bottom of infected files, thereby

signing them, as if signing a contract.

> "Clipper" scrambles all the data on a hard drive, rendering it
useless.

> "Lecture" deliberately formats the hard drive, destroying all
data, then scolds the user for not catching it.

> "Clinton" is designed to infect programs, but it eradicates
itself when it cannot decide which program to infect.

> "SPA" examines programs on the hard disk to determine whether
they are properly licensed. If the virus detects illegally copied
software, it seizes the computer's modem, automatically dials
911, and asks for help."

EXCUSE ME! Those are jokes, and commonly known Internet jokes at that! Did you
even research this friggin' paper? How can you begin to call yourselves experts? I mean,
really! Even if you know nothing about viruses, just looking at the text following the
names of those listed should be enough to tip you off. The only potential legitimate one
here is "Clipper." Dr. Solly says:

Clipper

(Jeru-Clipper)
Type : Memory-resident file virus.
Affects : COM and EXE files on execution.
File Growth : 1,413 bytes. EXE files are first rounded up to a multiple of 16.
Removal : Method 1.

Description
The text CLIPPER can be found in the virus. On the 16th of each month, if an infected
program is run the virus sets a flag when it goes memory-resident. The next time a
program is run it triggers the Trojan.

This is based on Jerusalem. The Clipper listed above is obviously a spoof on the proposed
Clipper chip. I'd like to rant some more, but I don't want to waste the space. If you'd like
to contact the authors to comment, feel free to:

Dr. Carter is a professor in the School of Criminal Justice at
Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.
david.carter@ssc.msu.edu

Dr. Katz is a professor in the Administration of Justice
Department at Wichita State University, Wichita, Kansas.
katz@twsuvm.uc.twsu.edu

*   Happy Hardcore, the maker of AOL4Free (he's a Yale student, incidentally), pled guilty to fraud this week. His program allowed him to access AOL for free for about a 6 month period. What sort of punishment is he looking at for about $100 worth of free online time? Try up to $250,000 and 5 years in prison. His sentencing is set for March, and it'll be interesting to see what happens. You can bet AOL's going to try and get the Feds to throw the book at him. However, even though I don't necessarily endorse his actions, a quarter million and some jail time seems a little stiff. Call my priorities misplaced, but I hardly think free online time equates to sentences given rapists, et al....

*   2600 printed this Kevin Mitnick update:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Update: Saturday, December 28, 1996

Kevin was placed in solitary confinement without warning. He was not allowed to call or notify anyone -- not even his attorney. A date for release from solitary confinement has not been scheduled. This means, without intervention, he could be there indefinitely.

The reason behind the Bureau of Prison's actions is not known at this time, other than they've labeled him a "security risk." As such, we can only speculate that it involves one or more of:

> a.Speaking on the phone with others about computers.
> b.Speaking with fellow inmates about computers.
> c.Reading computer-related publications mailed to him.
> d.Distributing computer-related publications to others.

All of Kevin's items have been confiscated by the BOP. This means all the discovery evidence and defense materials he's prepared have once again been taken away from him.

I happen to know that 2600's publisher, Emmanuel Goldstein, has sent Mitnick copies of the magazine, which is legal. Nonetheless, rumors abound that this type of reading material has not gone over well with the Feds.

*   2600 has also conveniently provided a copy of the hacked Air Force Web page at http://www.2600.com/hacked_af/www_af_mil.html. (Incidentally, NASA's site got hacked the same weekend. You can find a copy of it at http://www.vampire.org/nasahack/index.html. Why did we hear nothing about that one?) Funny how all of these government sites are getting shut down, eh?

*   The Journal of Electronic Defense recently presented an interesting piece on the near-future of info warfare.

Despite the expected downturn of the US defense budget in the next decade, the good news for the electronics industry is that the electronic content of weapon systems will grow, according to the Electronic Industries Association's (EIA's) "Ten-Year Forecast of Defense, NASA and Related Electronic Opportunities (1997-2006)," which was presented recently by EIA spokespersons at a conference in Washington, DC. The EIA forecast warned, however, that the US will also face significant challenges, such as speed-of-light weapons and information warfare, during the 10-year period.

The EIA's most dramatic - and perhaps most controversial - prediction concerned the impact that speed-of-light weapons would have in the anticipated "Revolution in Military Affairs" in the period 2010 and beyond. The EIA predicts that "whichever side owns the speed-of-light weapons will dominate the battlespace in almost every respect." If the prediction becomes reality, this would pose a significant challenge to electronic warfare specialists.

By 2010 the US will have improved information systems and awareness technologies which many believe "will lead a decisive revolution in military affairs," according to T.K. Jones, a spokesman for the EIA 2010 and Beyond Study Team.

The increasing use of open systems, however, leaves the US open to attacks from potential enemies. Such foes will have access to the latest technology and could cause costly damage to US information systems. But encryption can limit potential damage, according to the EIA spokesman. He added that it is "debatable whether we could be catastrophically disabled" during a 2010-style information war.

Turning their attention to shipboard EW programs, the EIA Missions, Programs and Technologies Team spokespersons judged that the Advanced Integrated EW System (AIEWS), which the Navy expects will replace its SLQ-32 shipboard EW system, is a "long shot." Some may disagree with this assessment, however, since the Navy is reportedly preparing to initiate the engineering and manufacturing development phase of the program in the near future (see the November 1996 "EC Monitor," p. 28).

The spokespersons, addressing the airborne surveillance, reconnaissance and electronic support measures category, estimated that the RC-135 Rivet Joint Service Life Extension Program (SLEP) and Product Improvement Program were "on track."

Addressing nonlethal airborne defense suppression programs, they also judged that the EA-6B "ICAP" and SLEP efforts were "on track."

Noting that "support to strike aircraft ratio was 3:1 in Desert Storm, going to 5:1 today," the EIA cautioned that the US must "understand the consequences of reduction of EW assets."

* Winn Schwartau's InfoWar printed this interesting BBC excerpt on Chinese info warfare:

This is only the BBC intro and two paragraphs from the article. Full text is available through Lexus Nexus or other content providers.

BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (August 1, 1996)

Source: 'Jiefangjun Bao', Beijing, in Chinese 21 May 96 p6

China has established a Military Strategies Research Centre in which the emphasis will be placed on winning the " information warfare of the information age" . According to an article in the Chinese army newspaper 'Jiefangjun Bao', China needs to develop an "oriental military strategy" based on the needs of the new era. The following is the text of an article by Zhang Feng entitled: "PLA [People's Liberation Army] military strategic study enters new phase: round-up of speeches of experts and scholars delivered at founding ceremony of Military Strategic Research Centre":

"After the Gulf War, when everyone was looking forward to eternal peace, a new military revolution emerged. This revolution is essentially a transformation from the mechanized warfare of the industrial age to the information warfare of the information age. Information warfare is a war of decisions and control, a war of knowledge and a war of intellect. The aim of information warfare will be gradually changed from "preserving oneself and wiping out the enemy" to "preserving oneself and controlling the opponent" . Information warfare includes electronic warfare, tactical deception, strategic deterrence, propaganda warfare, psychological warfare, network warfare and structural sabotage, all of which have something to do with strategy.

The "all-conquering stratagems" of Sun Zi more than two millenniums ago, such as "vanquishing the enemy without fighting" and subduing the enemy by "soft strike" or "soft destruction" , could finally be truly realized under today's technological conditions. Information warfare needs oriental military strategy. Oriental military strategy must be based on the needs of the new era,needs to be developed with the help of new technological conditions and needs to move towards a new stage."

*   Cyber-Rights reports the following:

From andyo@ora.com Mon Dec 30 12:10:42 1996
Received: from ruby.ora.com (ruby.ora.com [198.112.208.25]) by snyside.sunnyside.com (8.6.12/8.6.6 Beta9) with ESMTP id MAA07770 for <cyber-rights@cpsr.org>; Mon, 30 Dec 1996 12:10:40 -0800
Received: (from andyo@localhost) by ruby.ora.com (8.6.13/8.6.11) id PAA26140; Mon, 30 Dec 1996 15:10:30 -0500
Date: Mon, 30 Dec 1996 15:10:30 -0500
Message-Id: <199612302010.PAA26140@ruby.ora.com>
To: cyber-rights@cpsr.org
From: Cyber Rights <cyber-rights@cpsr.org>
Subject: cr> lambda 2.13: Crypto leaks

(Introduction from moderator: this comes from a Parisian correspondent, Jerome Thorel. I have taken the liberty of removing the first item, "Peacefire vs. Cybersitter," because its material has already appeared on this list.--Andy)

*   *   *   *   *
French Crypto Soap Opera :
other leaked documents
*   *   *   *   *

If you're an encryption addict and fluent in French, jump to the document published by
Planete Internet magazine : http://www.planete-internet.com/crypto/decret

It is a draft decree prepared by the SCSSI, the security agency, which draws a preliminary
picture of future French "trusted third party" agencies (TTPs), or "key recovery agents".

A brief summary of what the French electronic notary will look like:

The government (the SCSSI)
* Will say which encryption products will be covered; all crypto systems will be OK if a
key recovery scheme is scheduled; PGP and the like are not on the list of "approved"
products;
* Will decide which firm is OK to become a TTP; but no justification will be needed for
negative requests;

The TTP, "le notaire"
* All commercial firms or entities (SA, SARL, consortiums...) can become TTPs;
* But all its members, CEOs or associates must be "French," as well as the majority of its
finantial assets;
* Will be submitted to "professional secrecy" and obliged to keep third party encryption
keys away from illegal wiretapping activities;

The (commercial) user
* Will be obliged to use authorised encryption products;
* Will engage itself to fully cooperate with the TTP;

The (basic) user
* Even if the scheme will not be mandatory, using encryption without the backing of a
TTP will be considered illegal;
* Huge finantial and logistical procedures will discourage NGO's, small companies, and
citizens from protecting their electronic communications in a legal manner.

The new and fully complete policy is scheduled in France in the coming weeks.

Looks like the U.S. isn't the only country trying to stick it to its populace regarding
encryption....

*   Have you read Dan Farmer's new study, "Shall We Dust Moscow?"
(http://www.trouble.org/survey/)? He used SATAN (Security Administrator Tool for
Analyzing Networks) to test over 2200 Web sites over the past couple of months. His
findings are frightening. He found 34% to be "highly vulnerable" and 31% to be

"somewhat vulnerable." Moreover, 36% of the bank sites he tested were deemed to have serious security holes.

Farmer didn't obtain permission before testing sites. He focused on the following types of sites: banks and credit unions, newspapers, government, and sex sites. Of the 2200+ sites he tested, only 3 contacted him regarding security intrusions. While the results aren't necessarily stunning, they do reinforce the fact that Internet security remains an oxymoron.

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To Unsubscribe: : Send email to sch@well.com. In the subject line, write "unsubscribe tek thots." In the message area, write your email address.

At this point and until further notice, the email list will be handled manually.

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Online versions of this electronic newsletter will be archived at:
http://www.well.com/user/sch/tekthots.html.