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Best hacker contest staged in Singapore for Asia's elite

2004/8/21

By *Yeoh En-Lai SINGAPORE, AP*

Armed with laptops, modems, hard disk drives and sandwiches, 12 computer experts hunkered down Friday for a seven-hour contest to find the best hacker in tech-savvy Singapore.

Divided into six two-man teams, the contestants participating in "BlackOPS: HackAttack challenge 2004" have to defend their networks and servers from hacking while attacking other teams' systems. The top prize is a DVD burner and computer classes.

"It's a very realistic scenario," said Julian Ho, the organizer of the government backed contest. "Most security professionals engage in some kind of 'dark art'... Computer espionage is a very big thing."

The contestants hailed from Brunei, China, Myanmar and Singapore, but their identities couldn't be revealed because they all work in the computer security business, organizers said. All the entrants had to first pass a preliminary competition.

By Friday afternoon, the Brunei team -- dubbed "Frozen Throne" -- was leading.

Teams were not allowed to use the Internet as hacking tool, only computers and modems.

Asia has been the root of some of the worst attacks by hackers in recent years. In May 2000, the so-called Love Bug virus, released in the Philippines, overwhelmed e-mail servers worldwide and caused tens of millions of dollars in damage.

Singapore has said it is increasingly concerned about cyber security in the highly wired city-state where eight in 10 households own personal computers.

Hackers can be jailed for up to three years or fined up to 10,000 Singapore dollars (US\$5,852; euro 4,735) under Singapore's Computer Misuse Act.

Organizers had said they hoped the contest would help shed light on ways to prevent actual computer attacks.

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