

A STUDY

IN PARANOIA

The pirate community has advanced much over the last decade. With the advent of thousands of BBS systems across the country, pirates have a wealth of information at their disposal. With these

advancements, however, a new wave of paranoia has just recently swept the BBS community as a

consequence of the governments attempts to stamp out the pirate community, resulting from what the general public knows as Operation Sundevil. This

operation has attracted national attention, to the

point that Newsweek featured an article on the

operation in their July 2, 1990 issue.

While sysops have a right to feel

threatened by this crackdown, paranoia has reached new proportions. One must realize that this crackdown has mainly dealt with so-called carders, phreakers, and hackers, many sysops have felt a need to step

security. Stories of police raids on teenagers homes, with guns drawn and family members forcibly

restrained(Newsweek, July 2, 1990) and tales of

thousands of disks being confiscated by the feds have prompted a new wave of paranoia sweeping across the nation. Case in point

(the real handles have been

changed for obvious reasons) : The Hackster and his pal, The Insane are both caught carding. While one is set free, the other, The Insane spends the weekend at Juvenile Hall. Word spreads around that a plea

bargain is being attempted and that The Insane will

be giving out the names and numbers of Elite boards around the nation, and that soon, the feds will be

logging on under his handle and password, thereby busting the sysop and the users of the board. Within days, word has spread around and log-on messages have popped up on numerous boards around the

nation, all expressing the same ideas : This board is legitimate BBS system, all fraudulent activities such as carding, phreaking, etc..etc.. shall not be tolerated. The sysop of one mega-board even thinks of shutting his board down permanently, fearing that the feds will come to his house and confiscate his computer equipment. Meanwhile, The Terminator has done

nothing of the sort concerning any plea bargain, thus the whole episode was a complete fiasco.

Episodes such as the above are very

common nowadays. When the major board BBC went down, and the sysop began giving out the names of various users on his board, many board went down immediately. However, in this case, the paranoia was well justified. However, in the above case, emotions were carried too far and resulted in an unwanted

episode.

The government claims to have seized 42 pirate and phreak/hack boards around the country,

along with approximately 23,000 floppy disks in 14 cities. One must realize, however, that this is a very small percentage of the BBS community. Mainly,

Operation Sundevil have focused on upon the major hack/phreak boards, but paranoia has spread too all facets of the pirate community. Sysops are afraid of this so-called witch-hunt upon the pirates of the

world. One can only hope that paranoia doesnt in fact do more damage than the crackdown itself.