

Founder of IDTheftSecurity.com warns of Web-based organized crime that fuels online identity theft

(BOSTON, Massachusetts – April 18, 2005 – IDTheftSecurity.com) Organized crime is hijacking the Internet for its purposes. A nationally recognized security expert looks at what the activities of Web Mobs and key loggers mean for identity theft.

“The Internet is the thief’s playground,” said Robert Siciliano, a nationally televised and quoted authority on personal security and identity theft, “These cons will exploit every channel and employ every tool at their disposal. Identity thieves and computer hackers will seek increasingly unconventional and shady channels for their shenanigans.”

On Feb. 24, shortly after the ChoicePoint Inc. identity theft scandal broke, Siciliano appeared on CNBC's "The Closing Bell" to discuss the dangers of identity theft.

On April 8, SearchSecurity.com quoted him in response to renowned security technologist Bruce Schneier’s criticism of two-factor authentication, a technology Siciliano favors for staving identity theft.

CNN’s “Wolf Blitzer Reports” featured Siciliano after LexisNexis reports over 310,000 accounts breached on April 12. Siciliano is author of "The Safety Minute: 01" and an upcoming book, "Identity Theft Pandemic: Curing the Identity Theft Virus."

As reported by John McCormick and Deborah Gage of *Baseline Magazine* last month, the phenomenon of Web Mobs flourishes. Web Mobs function much like traditional organized crime rings, but the affiliations are looser, and Web Mobs more easily evade law enforcement. The differentiator is that Web Mobs proliferate and exist exclusively online.

“Organized crime has gained a stronger foothold online,” Siciliano said. “Nigerian crime rings fueled widespread phishing scams last summer and, allegedly, the thefts at ChoicePoint over the past year. The Russian mafia has displayed an appetite for identity theft for a long time. Even 22-year-old white-bread American kids in Web Mob Shadowcrew stole millions.”

In an illegal rendition of the business plan of data brokers such as ChoicePoint and LexisNexis, Web Mobs trade and buy credit card numbers and Social Security Numbers online for as little as \$10 each. Then participants buy under the guise of unsuspecting others’ names.

“The Web is great for organized crime, which is bad for legitimate business,” Siciliano said. “Online ruses come to light and receive widespread attention. Consumers lose confidence in their security and become less inclined to shop and bank online.”

"The banking industry seems to be in denial and simply hasn't harnessed opportunities to show clients it is on top of the problem," Siciliano continued. "I haven't seen one effective awareness campaign."

In yet another insight into online criminals' creativity, Blogs have become a haven for malicious code. As reported by Gregg Keizer of *TechWeb News*, hackers are storing their keyloggers, spyware programs that furtively intercept identities emanating from people's computers, at blogs. Blogs offer anonymity and a low threshold of security, which hackers prefer.

"Online crime has reached pandemic levels this past year with more than 14 major breaches of data," said Siciliano. "Hackers, identity thieves, and Web Mobs have elevated their game in tandem with the expansion of the Web. The speed of technology has far outpaced its security."

"The Internet has led to not only more opportunities for consumers," Siciliano added, "but also for criminals. Criminals look for the path of least resistance. The Web makes a virtual mugging or robbing a bank an easy score."

"New identification technologies and hardening practices are needed now more than ever," concluded Siciliano. "Two-factor authentication and other innovations must be implemented on a wide scale immediately if not sooner."

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Siciliano provides consumer education solutions to Fortune 500 companies and their clients. He is available to discuss identity theft as it pertains to personal finances, the terrorism threat, and national security.

A speaker featured on CNN, MSNBC, Fox News, "ABC News with Sam Donaldson," "The Montel Williams Show," "Maury Povich," "Sally Jesse Raphael" and "The Howard Stern Show," Siciliano leads seminars nationwide.

Siciliano has been quoted in Reuters, RealtyTimes.com, Woman's Day, Good Housekeeping, Mademoiselle, The New York Post, The New York Times, The Washington Times, The Chicago Tribune, The Christian Science Monitor and other publications.

Siciliano's blog is available at www.IDTheftSecurity.blogspot.com. Siciliano can be reached at 1 (888) SICILIANO (742-4542). The following URLs will take readers to his Web site and information about his work:

Main Web site: <http://www.IDTheftSecurity.com>

Siciliano's biography: http://www.idtheftsecurity.com/PDF/11x17_1wc.pdf

Testimonials: http://www.idtheftsecurity.com/PDF/11x17_3wc.pdf

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