Recount for President: No Change, but Holes Exposed in Voting Systems

Computer scientists J. Alex Halderman and Matt Bernhard, both faculty members at the University of Michigan, spoke about the U.S. elections at the recent Chaos Communication Convention in Hamburg, Germany. Based on the ballots in their limited recounts, they found no evidence that the election was hacked. But they emphasized that finding no evidence of hacking is not the same as finding solid affirmation that the election *wasn't* hacked. That's because only some of the ballots had a paper trail that could be recounted.

Halderman, Bernhard, and others including writers for *The New American* have previously expressed concerns about the vulnerability of paperless voting equipment to enable someone with read-write access to the database of vote totals to alter the numbers unnoticed. But Halderman and Bernhard expressed even further concerns about the centralization of the preparation of the voting equipment prior to elections. An article covering the event in *The Guardian* quoted Halderman:

> In Michigan, for example, 75% of counties use just two companies, each around 20 employees large, to load their machines. Compromising those two companies would theoretically be enough to swing the vote in the state. "How central these points of attack are, that was news to me," Halderman said.

Halderman made national headlines in 2010 when he led a team of his students as they white-hat hacked an Internet voting system that was made available to the public for testing. This event was covered by *The New American*, which quoted Halderman as saying:

> It was extremely easy. Within the first three hours or so of looking at the code we found the first open door and within 36 hours we had taken control of the system.

After penetrating the system, Halderman and his team modified ballots, changed passwords, and directed the system to play the University of Michigan's fight song. They also discovered that other hackers from Iran and China were trying to do some of the same things.

Halderman and other experts say the breach highlights flaws in online voting that cannot be fixed at present.

New American

Written by **Kurt Hyde** on December 31, 2016

The New American print issue for October 9, 2000 included an article entitled "Voting on the Web," which exposed some of the dangers of Internet voting and mentioned how individuals had attempted to hack that year's Arizona Democratic primary using denial of service attacks and password guessing. This raises an interesting question: Why the sudden interest in only *Russian* hackers, when such hacking attempts have been known for years, and previous reports concerning the problem by *The New American* and other news sources have been largely ignored?

There are other vulnerabilities in our elections besides lacking a paper trail in the equipment. Elections can be stolen by people voting several times under different names. They can also be swung by lax enforcement of voter registration laws allowing non-citizens — even illegal aliens — to vote. *The New American* has also reported on a recently discovered vulnerability of using computer programs such as Fraction Magic to alter vote totals and subtotals when there is no publicly verified paper trail of precinct totals.

Fortunately, American elections can be saved. It will take educating the voters on how to verify elections, as well as implementing audit procedures similar to the Targeted Audit Recount (TAR), which recounts the voter-verified paper ballots, allows losing candidates to pick the precincts to be audited, and has a mechanism for verifying who voted and whether they were eligible.

Our elections can also be improved by getting the federal government out of the process. That would include repealing such laws as Motor Voter and the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), for starters.

Photo, taken during a presidential election recount in Michigan, of a ballot with a vote for Trump: AP Images

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