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FOIA Case: 85764B
22 October 2019

JOHN GREENEWALD
27305 W LIVE OAK RD
SUITE 1203
CASTAIC CA 91384

Dear Mr. Greenewald:

This responds to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request of
19 October 2019 for a "Copy of records, electronic or otherwise, pertaining to:
Cicada 3301. Ask that you include all files, reports, memos, emails, inter-
agency communications etc. that may pertain to the above group." As
previously provided, your request has been assigned Case Number 85764. For
purposes of this request and based on the information you provided in your
letter, you are considered an "all other" requester. There are no assessable fees
for this request. Your request has been processed under the FOIA and some of
the documents you requested are enclosed. Certain information, however, has
been deleted from the enclosures.

We conducted a search for the requested material, and located material
responsive to your request. Four documents are enclosed. Certain
information, however, has been deleted from the enclosures.

This Agency is authorized by statute to protect certain information
concerning its activities (in this case, internal URLs) as well as the names of its
employees. Such information is exempt from disclosure pursuant to the third
exemption of the FOIA, which provides for the withholding of information
specifically protected from disclosure by statute. The specific statute
applicable in this case is Section 6, Public Law 86-36 (50 U.S. Code 3605). We
have determined that such information exists in this record, and we have
excised it accordingly.

To the extent you are seeking intelligence records on the Cicada 3301
group, to respond to your request, NSA would have to confirm or deny the
existence of intelligence records on the Cicada 3301 group. Were we to do so in
your case, we would have to do so for every other requester. This would
enable, for example, a terrorist or other adversary to file a FOIA request with us
in order to determine whether he or she was under surveillance or had evaded
it. This in turn would allow that individual to better assess whether they could
successfully act to damage the national security of the United States. For such

reasons, we can neither confirm nor deny the existence or non-existence of the records you requested.

The FOIA exempts several categories of information from disclosure. Its first exemption indicates that it does not apply to matters that are authorized by Executive Order to be kept secret and properly classified in the interest of national defense or foreign relations. The fact of the existence or non-existence of intelligence records on any individual would reveal a connection or interest that is an appropriately classified matter. Paragraph 3.6(a) of Executive Order 13526 ("Classified National Security Information") specifically authorizes this type of response, also known as a Glomar response, to such requests made under the FOIA.

Moreover, the third exemption under the FOIA authorizes the withholding of information specifically protected from disclosure by statute. The fact of the existence or non-existence of records responsive to your request is currently exempted from disclosure by the following statutes: Title 18 U.S. Code 798; Title 50 U.S. Code 3024(i); and Section 6, Public Law 86-36 (50 U.S. Code 3605).

Information which is not responsive to the subject of your request has been removed from the enclosures and marked "Non-Responsive." Further consideration of the non-responsive portions would be necessary, thus causing additional delay in our response.

Since these deletions may be construed as a partial denial of your request, you are hereby advised of this Agency's appeal procedures.

You may appeal this decision. If you decide to appeal, you should do so in the manner outlined below. NSA will endeavor to respond within 20 working days of receiving any appeal, absent any unusual circumstances.

- The appeal must be sent via U.S. postal mail, fax, or electronic delivery (e-mail) and addressed to:

  NSA FOIA/PA Appeal Authority (P132)
  National Security Agency
  9800 Savage Road STE 6932
  Fort George G. Meade, MD 20755-6932

  The facsimile number is 443-479-3612.
  The appropriate email address to submit an appeal is
  FOIARSC@nsa.gov.

- It must be postmarked or delivered electronically no later than 90 calendar days from the date of this letter. Decisions appealed after 90 days will not be addressed.
- Please include the case number provided above.
- Please describe with sufficient detail why you believe the denial of requested information was unwarranted.

You may also contact our FOIA Public Liaison at foialo@nsa.gov for any further assistance and to discuss any aspect of your request. Additionally, you may contact the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) at the National Archives and Records Administration to inquire about the FOIA mediation services they offer. The contact information for OGIS is as follows:

Office of Government Information Services
National Archives and Records Administration
8601 Adelphi Rd. - OGIS
College Park, MD 20740
ogis@nara.gov
877-684-6448
(Fax) 202-741-5769

Sincerely,
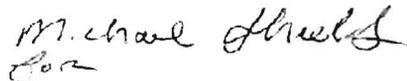
JOHN R. CHAPMAN
Chief, FOIA/PA Office
NSA Initial Denial Authority

Encls:
a/s

Search

(b)(3)-P.L. 86-36

(U//FOUO) Perusing and Pursuing Public Puzzles, officially or otherwise
Jump to first unread post ¶

Submitted by [ ] May 8 at 11:12 am

Keywords:

(TS//SI/TK//REL) Webdriver Torso, Cicada3301, puzzles

Statistics:

1 comment | **Contains 28 topics ▶** | Viewed by 237 people | **Comments from 1 person ▶**

Abstract:

(U//FOUO) Is there any individual or group in NSA or the IC that provides a central repository for information or questions about such odd things as the Webdriver Torso videos on You Tube, the Cicada 3301 puzzles, etc.? Should there be?

Description:

(U//FOUO) There's lots of weird stuff on the internet, and some of it is in the form of complex puzzles or unusual communications. Recent examples would be the WebDriver Torso videos (over 70,000 videos of geometric shapes and electronic tones, each only a few seconds

(b)(3)-P.L. 86-36

6/10/2014

long) or the Cicada 3301 multi-stage puzzles in 2012, 2013, and 2014.

(U//FOUO) It's clearly impossible for NSA to know or care about all such oddities, but some of them are of a level of complexity and rigor that one can easliy imagine the purposes behind them as possibly being on interest to us. Aside from that, some of them might make good practice for NSAers, whether or not they prove to be of official interest.

(U//FOUO) In light of that, is there any sort of "Weird Puzzle Central" within NSA, where interested parties could pool their info on such things? Should there be?

(U//FOUO) The Cicada 3301 puzzles are a good example of why this might be useful. The first clue to the first puzzle (each puzzle has multiple stages requiring all manner of skills and insights to solve) appeared in January 2012. Another appeared in January 2013. The next appeared this year. The puzzles are cast in the guise of some sort of recruitment effort looking for "intelligent people", but leave unstated who is looking for such people, and why.

(U//FOUO) It would seem to me that whether one's interest is official or unofficial, the collective effort of NSAers could be optimized if there was a central repository. But given that I only recently stumbled upon some of these phenomenon, perhaps the first question is whether such a repository or clearinghouse for information already exists.

Show: | All Comments | Helpful Comments | (b)(3)-P.L. 86-36

Comment by[   ]
May 8 at 11 45 am

(U//FOUO) Sounds like the sort of thing Kryptos might be interested in.

🔊 RSS Feed

(b)(3)-P.L. 86-36

6/10/2014

Usage Guidelines (updated February 27)

Last Modified June 10, 2014
Tapioca Design[   ]and[   ]R65   Derived from NSA/CSS Manual 1-52, Dated: 8 January 2007
Content Steward and Page Publisher:[   ]   Declassify on 20320108

* Dynamic Page - Highest Possible Classification is
  ~~TOP SECRET // SI // TK // REL TO USA, FVEY~~

Page took 0 105 seconds to load

(b)(3)-P.L. 86-36

(b)(3)-P.L. 86-36

6/10/2014

Doc ID: 6684950			IC Interactions with the Entertainment Industry		
Date(s) of the engagement	A description of the nature and duration of the engagement	Cost incurred by the U.S. Government for the engagement	Describe the benefits to the U.S. Government for the engagement	Was any information declassified, and was any classified information improperly disclosed for the engagement	A description of the work produced through the engagement
-Oct-17 to 17-Aug-	checks were Columbia Pictures, Sony Pictures,	$500.00	Protection and privacy of actual NSA personnel who have same or similar name of proposed fictional name.	No	Checked personnel data base for same or similar names to those proposed for use in the production. Cleared or rejected proposed name for use in the production.
2017-10-27	Harper Collins requested photos for book titled "In the Enemy's House: The Secret Saga of the FBI Agent and the Code Breaker who Caught the Russian Spy."	$100.00	Assist in telling story of past success of NSA during the Cold War	No	Searched NSA photo archives. Found and released one photo for the book.
2018-01-05	CNN desired to film B roll for its DECLASSIFIED episode	$500.00	Assist in demonstrating to the public how NSA contributes to national security.	No	Coordinated film crew's recording of scenes at NSA museum to complete the DECLASSIFIED episode.
2018-03-15	Corporate level visit to NSA Headquarters by Mr. Daniel Craig, writer/actor of the James Bond movie franchise	$5,000.00	Mr. Craig is conducting extensive research to take the next Bond film into more of a cyber focus. He visited NSA to discuss our perspectives on cyber and our conflicts in cyberspace. The visit gave Mr. Craig an accurate view of NSA's role in cybersecurity with the expectation that the agency's contributions to cybersecurity would be accurately portrayed in upcoming productions.	No	To date, NSA is not aware of Mr. Craig's progress in developing a cyber script for the James Bond movie franchise.
2018-04-13	Mandalay Sports Media sought NSA's consent to license from National Geographic Channels a segment of "Inside NSA" for use in "Uncovering Cicada 3301" production.	$2,000.00	Reference to NSA in this film highlights to the public the caliber of the NSA workforce.	No	Reviewed footage from National Geographic's "Inside the NSA" and granted license to Mandalay Sports Media for use in "Uncovering Cicada 3301" production.
2018-06-19	Corporate level visit to NSA Headquarters by Mr. Peter Kosminsky, film writer and producer for UK/Stonehenge Films.	$3,000.00	Mr. Kominsky is conducting extensive research to take his next television series into more of a cyber focus. He visited NSA to discuss our cyber perspectives and our conflicts in cyberspace. The main character in the series will be portrayed as a female cyber warrior. NSA collaborated with GCHQ on the visit, since former GCHQ Director Hannigan is a consultant on the project. The visit gave Mr. Kosminsky an accurate view of NSA's role in cybersecurity with the expectation that the agency's contributions to cybersecurity would be accurately portrayed in upcoming productions, as well as its collaboration with GCHQ.	No	To date, NSA is not aware of Mr. Kosminsky's progress in developing a cyber script for the series.
2018-08-20	KM Records/BIG Media asked for Venona Project pictures, already on our website, for use in two WWII episodes.	$50.00	Demonstrates to the public the benefits of cryptology in hwelping to defeat WWII enemies.	No	Granted permission to use publicly available photos.
2018-06-08	VantaBlack sought consent to refer to "NSA," to use the NSA logo and to have fictional NSA characters in its film "Cicada 3301."	$300.00	Reference to NSA in this film highlights to the public the caliber of the NSA workforce.	No	Granted permission to refer to NSA and to use NSA fictional chanracters, but not the NSA logo.
2017-12-07	History Channel UK - Use of Sigaba Room/B-Roll in Museum/Staff interviews about Code Talkers and Enigma demo	$242.00	Educated public about cryptology	No	Segment "Combat Machines"
2018-01-09	Oxford University Press - Review segment of book pertaining to National Crytoplogic Museum (NCM)/photos of NCM	$220.00	Publicized NCM	No	Segment in "America's Scientific Treasures: A Travel Companion"

Doc ID: 6684950 Date(s) of the engagement	A description of the nature and duration of the engagement	Cost incurred by the U.S. Government for the engagement	Describe the benefits to the U.S. Government for the engagement	Was any information declassified, and was any classified information improperly disclosed for the engagement	A description of the work produced through the engagement
2017-12-29	Polish TV - Use of Sigaba Room/B-roll footage in NCM/staff interviews about Polands role in Enigma and Bombe	$110.00	Educated public about cryptology	No	
2018-01-16	National Geographic - Reaseaching information about Great Seal	$132.00	Would have educated public about cryptology	No	On-camera interview. Did not materialize.
2018-01-29	Travel Channel - On-camera interview about CDR Rochefort & Station Hypo	$308.00	Educated public about cryptology	No	Travel Channel Episode: "Ground Zero Flag, Space Suit and Pacific Codebreaker"
2018-02-22	.Financial Times - provided tham a guided tour of the NCM	$0.00		No	
2018-02-23	PBS - Use of Sigaba room by USCC PAO for interview	$0.00		No	
2018-03-20	BBC - Inquiry to shoot SIGSALY at NCM	$44.00	Educated public about cryptology	No	Segment for BBC Science series
2018-03-23	WCBM/Baltimore Examiner - inquiry to do a piece on the NCM	$44.00	Educate public about cryptology	No	In progress
2018-04-24	America in WWII Magazine - Tour & interview about NCM	$132.00	Publicizes NCM	No	Article "Motel of Secrets"
2018-05-01	WGTS Radio - Information on breaking Enigma	$66.00	Promotes Museum	No	Radio piece on achieving the impssible
2018-06-24	Midway Island Entertainment Inc. - Loan of SIGABAS and Station HYPO equipment	$88.00	Provide accurate info about WWII crypto history	No	Set props for "Midway" movie & possible consulation
2018-06-21	Smithsonian Magazine - request for historical photos	$88.00	Educated public about cryptology	No	Article in Smithsonian Magazine
2018-06-26	Wall Street Journal - on-camera tour of NCM for online show	$176.00	Educate public about cryptology	No	Online documentary: The Future of Everything
2018-08-30	Air France travel - Request for photos for on-line article	$22.00	Promote NCM	No	Photos to be included in online article
00-Dec-17	Chris Kornelis, author - request of SIGSALY calls	$220.00		No	Research
00-Jan-18	Lucas Reilly, Mental Floss - Research on Beale ciphers	$44.00	Pronotes cryptology	No	http://mentalfloss.com/article/540277/beale-ciphers-burled-treasure
00-Jan-18	Steven James, thriller author - research on geoloclational analysis	$22.00		No	on-going
00-Feb-18	Liz Mundy, author - research on buildings named for women	$88.00	Promotes women in cryptology	No	https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/why-we-need-start-building-monuments-groundbreaking-women-180968306/
00-Mar-18	Research on biography Noor Inayat, a female WWII British Agent	$88.00	Promotes women in cryptology	No	research
00-Mar-18	Story House Productions, copyright on photo	$264.00	Promotes NCM with the photo	No	https://www.storyhousepro.com/history-of-violence/
00-Mar-18	Ray Batvinis, author researching Wesband	$264.00	UNK	No	on-going
00-Apr-18	Smithsonian Magazine, request for photos of women in Venona	$176.00	Promotes women in cryptology	No	https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/women-code-breakers-unmasked-soviet-spies-180970034/
00-Apr-18	Liz Mundy, author research for Venona article for Smithsonian Magasine	$660.00	Promotes women in cryptology	No	https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/women-code-breakers-unmasked-soviet-spies-180970034/ and https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/how-cipher-like-soviet-180970032/

Doc ID: 6684950				
Date(s) of the engagement	A description of the nature and duration of the engagement	Cost incurred by the U.S. Government for the engagement	Describe the benefits to the U.S. Government for the engagement	Was any information declassified, and was any classified information improperly disclosed for the engagement	A description of the work produced through the engagement
00-May-18	72 Films (for National Geographic) photos from surveillance in 1980s	$88.00	UNK	No	Unknown at this time
00-May-18	Mental Floss, photos of William Friedman	$88.00	Promotes history of NSA	No	Possible article
00-Jun-18	Midway Island Entertainment Inc., research of IBM equipment used at Station HYPO	$176.00	Promotes hisotry of NSA	No	Research
00-Jun-18	Jean Daigneau, author request assist for copies of photos posted on NSA.gov site	$132.00	Promotes STEM for Kids	No	Cyrptology for Kids book - publish date TBD

From:	
To:	
Subject:	(U) FYI: Open Source Articles: LEAKS, cyber, etc 26-November - 2013
Date:	Tuesday, November 26, 2013 5:02:18 PM
Attachments:	image001.png
	image002.png

Classification: UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

(U) FYI: Open Source Articles: LEAKS, cyber, etc 26-November - 2013

(U//FOUO) PLEASE NOTE: When forwarding these unclassified or FOUO
scrapes – NOTE: Any "annotations" or additional comments you may add to
discuss relevance to mission with colleagues can **drastically change the
classification level**.   So please note – when sharing and commenting on
open source material – please RECLASSIFY the content with the appropriate
markings as needed. Be safe, my friends!

(b)(3)-P.L. 86-36

(U//FOUO) Open source reads below. Hyper links should work. For
searching for words in this email using MS. Outlook – click your top key
"F4" (thanks ⬚) to bring up a box will say "Find and Replace" –
just type in your term you wish to find and MS Outlook will do the rest.

Cheers,

Media Leaks

An IACSP Q & A With David G. Major.
Journal of Counterterrorism & Homeland Security International. Volume 19,
issue 4 ISSN 1552-5155   1 December 2013 00:00 GMT
ENEMY OF THE STATE.
VARGAS-COOPER, NATASHA *Advocate*. Issue 1070 ISSN 0001-8996 1
December 2013 00:00 GMT
Snowden and His Fellow Fantasists
11/26/2013 : Wall Street Journal
NSA Chief Offered To Resign Over Snowden Scandal: Report
11/26/2013 : Reuters
NSA Reportedly Compromised More Than 50,000 Networks Worldwide
11/26/2013 : Constantin, Lucian: CIO
Now is the 'golden age of SIGINT' says NSA in document pushing for

Pages 2-120 withheld as Non-Responsive

The internet mystery that has the world baffled
Chris Bell   Canwest News Service 25 November 2013

One evening in January last year, Joel Eriksson, a 34-year-old computer analyst from Uppsala, Sweden, was trawling the web, looking for distraction, when he came across a message on an Internet forum(http://uncovering-cicada.wikia.com/wiki/What_Happe ned_Part_1_%282013%29).

The message was in stark white type, against a black background.

"Hello," it said. "We are looking for highly intelligent individuals. To find them, we have devised a test. There is a message hidden in this image. Find it, and it will lead you on the road to finding us. We look forward to meeting the few that will make it all the way through. Good luck."

The message was signed: "3301."

A self-confessed IT security "freak" and a skilled cryptographer, Eriksson was interested immediately.

This was, he knew, an example of digital steganography: the concealment of secret information within a digital file, most often seen in conjunction with image files.

TRIED HIS LUCK

A recipient who can work out the code - for example, to alter the colour of every 100th pixel - can retrieve an entirely different image from the

randomized background "noise."

It's a technique more commonly associated with nefarious ends, such as concealing child pornography. In 2002 it was suggested that al-Qaida operatives had planned the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks via the auction site eBay, by encrypting messages inside digital photographs.

Sleepily - it was late, and he had work in the morning - Eriksson thought he'd try his luck decoding the message from "3301."

After only a few minutes work he'd got somewhere: a reference to "Tiberius Claudius Caesar" and a line of meaningless letters.

He deduced it might be an embedded "(
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cae sar_cipher)Caesar cipher(
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cae sar_cipher)"(
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cae sar_cipher) - an encryption technique named after Julius Caesar, who used it in private correspondence. It replaces characters by a letter a certain number of positions down the alphabet.

As Claudius was the fourth emperor, it suggested "four" might be important - and lo, within minutes, Eriksson found another web address buried in the image's code.

Feeling satisfied, he clicked the link.

DUCK DECOY TAUNT

It was a picture of a duck with the message: "Woops! Just decoys this way. Looks like you can't guess how to get the message out."

"If something is too easy or too routine, I quickly lose interest," said Eriksson. "But it seemed like the challenge was a bit harder than a Caesar cipher after all. I was hooked."

Eriksson didn't realize it then, but he was embarking on one of the Internet's most enduring puzzles; a scavenger hunt that has led thousands of competitors across the web, down telephone lines, out to several physical locations around the globe, and into unchartered areas of the "darknet".

So far, the hunt has required a knowledge of number theory, philosophy and classical music. An interest in both cyberpunk literature and the Victorian occult has also come in handy, as has an understanding of Mayan numerology.

It has also featured a poem, a tuneless guitar ditty, a femme fatale called "Wind" who may or may not exist in real life, and a clue on a lamp post in Hawaii.

WHO, WHAT, WHY?

Only one thing is certain: As it stands, no one is entirely sure what the challenge - known as Cicada 3301 - is all about or who is behind it.

Depending on who you listen to, it's either a mysterious secret society, a statement by a new political think tank, or an arcane recruitment drive by some quasi-military body. Which means, of course, everyone thinks it's the CIA.

For some, it's just a fun game, like a more complicated Sudoku; for others, it has become an obsession.

Almost two years on, Eriksson is still trying to work out what it means for him. "It is, ultimately, a battle of the brains," he says. "And I have always had a hard time resisting a challenge."

On the night of Jan. 5, 2012, after reading the "decoy" message from the duck, Eriksson began to tinker with other variables.
ANOTHER HIDDEN MESSAGE

Taking the duck's mockery as a literal clue, Eriksson decided to run it through a decryption program called OutGuess(http://www.outguess.org/). He had success: another hidden message, this time linking to another message board on the massively popular news forum Reddit(http://www.reddit.com/r/cicada/).

Here, encrypted lines from a book were being posted every few hours. But there were also strange symbols comprising several lines and dots - Mayan numbers, Eriksson realized. And duly translated, they led to another cipher.

Up to this point, Eriksson would admit, none of the puzzles had really required any advanced skills, or suggested anything other than a single anonymous riddle-poser having some fun.

"But then it all changed," said Eriksson. "And things started getting interesting."

UP A GEAR

Suddenly, the encryption techniques jumped up a gear. And the puzzles themselves mutated in several different directions: hexadecimal characters, reverse-engineering, prime numbers. Pictures of the cicada insect - reminiscent of the moth imagery in Thomas Harris's The Silence of the Lambs - became a common motif.

"I knew cicadas only emerge every prime number of years - 13, or 17 - to avoid synchronizing with the life cycles of their predators," said Eriksson.

"It was all starting to fit together."

The references became more arcane, too. The book, for example, turned out to be The Lady of the Fountain(http://meadhall.homestead.com/u ntitled4.html), a poem about King Arthur taken from The Mabinogion, a collection of pre-Christian medieval Welsh manuscripts.

Later, the puzzle would lead him to the cyberpunk writer William Gibson - specifically his 1992 poem Agrippa(http://www.williamgibsonbooks.co m/source/agrippa.asp) (a book of the dead), infamous for the fact that it was published only on a 3.5-inch floppy disk, and was programmed to erase itself after being read once.

CODEBREAKERS UNITE

But as word spread across the web, thousands of amateur codebreakers joined the hunt for clues. Armies of users of 4chan, the anarchic Internet forum where the first Cicada message is thought to have appeared, pooled their collective intelligence and endless free time to crack the puzzles.

Within hours they'd decoded The Lady of the Fountain. The new message, however, was another surprise: "Call us," it read, "at telephone number 214-390-9608." By this point, only a few days after the original image was posted, Eriksson had taken time off work to join the pursuit full time.

UNEXPECTED TURN

"This was definitely an unexpected turn," he recalled.

"And the first hint that this might not just be the work of a random Internet troll."

Although now disconnected, the phone line was based in Texas, and led to an answering machine. There, a robotic voice told them to find the prime numbers in the original image. By multiplying them together, the solvers found a new prime and a new website: 845145127.com(http://845145127.com). A countdown clock and a huge picture of a cicada confirmed they were on the right path.

"It was thrilling, breathtaking by now," said Eriksson. "This shared feeling of discovery was immense. But the plot was about to thicken even more."

14 GPS CO-ORDINATES

Once the countdown reached zero, at 5 p.m. GMT on Jan. 9, it showed 14 GPS co-ordinates around the world: locations in Warsaw, Paris, Seattle, Seoul, Arizona, California, New Orleans, Miami, Hawaii and Sydney.

In Sweden, Eriksson waited as, around the globe, amateur solvers left their apartments to investigate. And, one by one reported what they'd found: a poster, attached to a lamp post, bearing the cicada image and a QR code (the black-and-white bar code often seen on adverts these days and designed to take you to a website via your smartphone).

"It was exhilarating," said Eriksson. "I was suddenly aware of how much effort they must have been putting into creating this kind of challenge."

For the growing Cicada community, it was explosive - proof this wasn't merely some clever neckbeard in a basement winding people up, but actually

a global organization of talented people. But who?

Speculation had been rife since the image first appeared. Some thought Cicada might merely be a PR stunt; a particularly labyrinthine Alternate Reality Game (ARG) built by a corporation to ultimately, and disappointingly, promote a new movie or car.

ENTER 'WIND'

Microsoft, for example, had enjoyed huge success with their critically acclaimed I Love Bees(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_ Love_Bees)ARG campaign. Designed to promote the Xbox game Halo 2 in 2004, it used random pay phones worldwide to broadcast a War of the Worlds-style radio drama that players would have to solve.

But there were complicating factors to Cicada. For one, the organizers were actively working against the participants. One "solver," a female known only as Wind from Michigan, contributed to the quest on several message boards before the community recognized that she was deliberately disseminating false clues.

Other interference was more pointed. One long, cautionary diatribe, left anonymously on the website Pastebin(http://pastebin.com/), claimed to be from an ex-Cicada member - a non-English military officer recruited to the organization "by a superior".

Cicada, he said, "was a Left-Hand Path religion disguised as a progressive scientific organization," made up of "military officers, diplomats, and academics who were dissatisfied with the direction of the world." Their plan, the writer claimed, was to transform humanity into the Nietzschen Übermensch.

'DANGEROUS ORGANIZATION'

"This is a dangerous organization," he concluded, "their ways are nefarious."

With no other clues, it was also assumed by many to be a recruitment drive by the CIA, Britain's MI6 or the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA), as part of a search for highly talented cryptologists. It wouldn't have been the first time

such tactics had been used.

Back in 2010, for example, Air Force Cyber Command - the United States' hacking defence force, based at Fort Meade in Maryland - secretly embedded a complex hexadecimal code in their new logo. Cybercom head Lt.-Gen Keith Alexander then challenged the world's amateur analysts to crack it (it took them three hours).

And in September of this year, the U.K.'s GCHQ launched the Can You Find It?(https://canyoufindit.co.uk/) initiative, a series of cryptic codes designed to root out the best British cryptographers. As GCHQ's head of resourcing Jane Jones said at the time, "It's a puzzle but it's also a serious test - the jobs on offer here are vital to protecting national security."

RECRUITMENT TACTIC?

Dr. Jim Gillogly, former president of the American Cryptogram Association, has been cracking similar codes for years and says it's a tried and tested recruitment tactic.

"During the Second World War, the top-secret Government Code and Cypher School used crossword puzzles printed in The Daily Telegraph to identify good candidates for Bletchley Park," Gillogly said. "But I'm not sure the CIA or NSA is behind Cicada. Both are careful with security, the recent Snowden case notwithstanding. And starting the puzzle on [the anarchic Internet forum] 4chan might attract people with less respect for authority than they would want working inside."

But that doesn't rule out other organizations.

"Computer and data security is more important than ever today," said Gillogly. The proliferation of wireless devices, mobile telephones, e-commerce websites such as Amazon and chip-and-pin machines, means the demand for cryptologists has never been higher.

"One of the more important components of security systems is the efficacy of the cryptography being used," Gillogly said, "which means cryptanalysts are in higher demand than ever before - no longer just with the intelligence services. It could just as easily be a bank or software company [behind

Cicada]."

HACKERS HUNTING TALENT?

Eriksson himself agrees. As a regular speaker at Black Hat Briefings - the secretive computer security conferences where government agencies and corporations get advice from hackers - he knows certain organizations occasionally go "fishing" for new recruits like this. But to him the signs point to a recruitment drive by a hacker group such as Anonymous.

"I can't help but notice," he said, "that the locations in question are all places with some of the most talented hackers and IT security researchers in the world."

Either way, their identity would prove irrelevant. When the QR codes left on the lamp posts were decoded, a hidden message pointed the solvers towards a TOR address. TOR, short for The Onion Router, is an obscure routing network that allows anonymous access to the "darknet" - the vast, murky portion of the Internet that cannot be indexed by standard search engines.

Estimated to be 5,000 times larger that the "surface" web, it's in these recesses that you'll find human-trafficking rings, black market drug markets and terrorist networks. And it's here that the Cicada path ended.

SHUTDOWN WAS ABRUPT

After a designated number of solvers visited the address, the website shut down with a terse message: "We want the best, not the followers." The chosen few received personal emails - detailing what, none have said, although one solver heard they were now being asked to solve puzzles in private. Eriksson, however, was not among them.

"It was my biggest anticlimax - when I was too late to register my email at the TOR hidden service," he said. "If my sleep-wake cycle had been different, I believe I would have been among the first."

Regardless, a few weeks later, a new message from Cicada was posted on Reddit. It read: "Hello. We have now found the individuals we sought. Thus our month-long journey ends. For now."

All too abruptly for thousands of intrigued solvers, it had gone quiet.

FRESH MESSAGE

Except no. On Jan. 4 this year there was something new. A fresh image, with a new message in the same white text: "Hello again. Our search for intelligent individuals now continues."

Analysis of the image would reveal another poem, this time from the book Liber Al Vel Legis(http://hermetic.com/legis/), a religious doctrine by the English occultist and magician Aleister Crowley. From there, the solvers downloaded a 130Mb file containing thousands of prime numbers. And also an MP3 file: a song called The Instar Emergence(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y A1fONCH-CY) by the artist 3301, which begins with the sound of - guess what? - cicadas.

TRAIL GOES COLD AGAIN

Analysis of that has since led to a Twitter account pumping out random numbers(https://twitter.com/12315070513 21), which in turn produced a "gematria"- an ancient Hebrew code table, but this time based on Anglo-Saxon runes. This pointed the solvers back into the darknet, where they found seven new physical locations, from Dallas to Moscow to Okinawa, and more clues.

But that's where, once again, the trail has gone cold. Another select group of "first solvers" have been accepted into a new "private" puzzle, this time, say reports, a kind of Myers-Briggs multiple-choice personality test.

But still, we are no closer to knowing the source, or fundamental purpose, of Cicada 3301.

"That's the beauty of it, though," said Eriksson. "It is impossible to know for sure until you have solved it all."

That is why for him, and thousands of other hooked enthusiasts, Jan. 4, 2014 is so important: that's when the next set of riddles is due to begin again.

"Maybe all will be revealed then," he said with a grin. "But somehow, I doubt it."

Give us the facts, not Wikipedia's witterings
Oliver Kamm   *The Times*   26 November 2013

The "About" section of Wikipedia candidly acknowledges that "not all articles are of encyclopedic quality from the start".

When the date of Prince William and Kate Middleton's wedding was announced, Hugo Rifkind — goaded, I concede with shame, by his colleagues — went to the Wikipedia page for "29 April" and added to it. On that day in 1872, he noted, Queen Victoria had been rushed to hospital in Inverness after breaking a toe while fly-fishing at Balmoral. This sobering detail, invented at a moment's notice and entered into Wikipedia with no supporting evidence, duly appeared in two national newspapers the next day.

Jimmy Wales, Wikipedia's founder, is wearily used to the recreational interpolation of fictions. He was interviewed on Friday for an al-Jazeera programme called Head to Head, to be broadcast in the new year.

The guests who crossexamined him included me. I suggested his venture was anti-intellectual and he good-humouredly compared my social skills to those of Julian Assange.

There isn't much about the digital age, and its effect on education and literacy, that I won't enthuse over. Wikipedia is a case apart.

Many of its articles are thorough and informative (though vanishingly few are well-written). The problem lies with contentious issues that have a right and a wrong answer and where people with the wrong answer don't know they're

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Media Leaks

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Reuters Wire Service 6 January 2014 23:16 GMT
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Debate mounts over punishing Snowden for NSA leaks
Chicago Tribune 6 January 2014 00:00 GMT
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Surveillance / Cyber

Code-breaking scavenger hunt has the Internet mystified
1/6/2014 : CBSNews.com

Is there a secret society attempting to recruit the best coder breakers in the world, using clues that spans across the globe and Internet?

That's what some people believe the case is with the elusive Cicada 3301 online puzzle, which, if history repeats itself, will make a return within days.

Tekk Nolagi, a teenager from the San Francisco Bay Area who asked not to be identified by his real name, says he was sitting in a high school robotics lab in 2012 with his friends when the photo first appeared on the image message board 4chan.org.

"It was posted on the paranormal activity thread or something like that." Tekk told CBS News over the phone. "A bunch of people said, 'wow, that's creepy' and didn't say anything else."

It was an image of white text against a black background that said:

"Hello. We are looking for highly intelligent individuals. To find them, we have devised a test. There is a message hidden in this image. Find it, and it will lead you on the road to finding us. We look forward to meeting the few that will make it all the way through. Good luck. 3301."

And with that image, a scavenger hunt began that involved online images, cryptography, number theory, physical clues, phone calls, QR codes and websites on the "darknet."

Some of the theories about who is behind the puzzle include the National Security Agency, Central Intelligence Agency or a secret society.

Some have speculated that the puzzle is a recruitment program or an alternate reality game, where players collect clues, interact with other players and solve puzzles in real life.

According to the participants online, when the image was opened in a text editing program, a cryptic message appeared that was interpreted as a Web address. Those who were trying to solve the mystery were led to a website, which in turn led to a Reddit.com forum called " a2e7j6ic78h0j " that revealed a series of symbols and coded messages.

Several more clues were uncovered -- including hidden messages that suggested the key to breaking the code was already posted on the a2e7j6ic78h0j forum. Once decoded, a U.S. phone number was revealed.

The number, which has since been disconnected, had a message for callers that was yet another clue. This time, a riddle led to a website that had a picture of a cicada and what appeared to be geographic coordinates.

According to online reports , posters were found at some of the locations around the world, including Paris, Warsaw, Seoul and Miami. Each poster had an image of a cicada and a QR code that, when scanned, revealed a
message.

Tekk says he worked with a group of nine active participants and several additional helpers to solve the breadcrumb trail of clues left by the game's creators. One of the people working with him sent his father out to see one of the posters, which was located in Australia, in real life. It was a physical piece of the worldwide puzzle that they could confirm existed.

"I was in awe and frightened because I didn't know exactly what the reach of these people were. Imagining they have access to all these different places around the world at the same time kind of blew all our minds. We started getting a little bit nervous in the chat room," he said.

After a series of increasingly intricate clues, a final message was discovered on the Reddit forum with the symbols and coded text that
read:

"We have now found the individuals we sought. Thus our month-long journey ends. For now. Thank you for your dedication and effort. If you were unable to complete the test, or did not receive an email, do not despair. There will be more opportunities like this one."

Soon after, the trail went cold and no new clues were release until a year later on Jan. 4, 2013, when a new image appeared on 4chan.

Tekk chose not to continue chasing the clues the following year, saying, "I stopped after my first year because it was too time consuming."

Just like the previous year, a similar trail of clues was revealed after the initial image appeared on 4chan, including a sequence of prime numbers, an audio file and a mysterious Twitter account tweeting coded messages.

One of the clues led to a bizarre test that was reportedly emailed to participants asked multiple-choice questions like: "I am the voice* inside my head" and "Observation changes the thing being observed." The choices in answers included: true, false, indeterminate, meaningless, self-referential, game rule, strange loop and none of the above.

One of the final pieces of the 2013 puzzle is an email that was reportedly sent to those who passed the test. There hasn't been much activity since that time, and much of the community following Cicada 3301 anxiously waits for Jan. 4, 2014 to arrive, when a new clue might be posted online.

What little information is known about Cicada 3301 has been posted on websites like Wikia and Github, but no one seems to know who is behind the puzzle and what their motives may be for creating such an elaborate trail of clues.

Tekk has some theories of what the group's end game may be, which he says was revealed to him when he found himself in a chat room, of sorts, with people claiming to the organizers the Cicada 3301 puzzle. "It seems like their end goal would be to have some kind of free and open cryptography and anonymity software released to the public, but that's just a small facet of what they're trying to do. I don't think anybody actually knows what they're going to do from there," he said.

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Public concern about access to personal data on rise in Ireland: Data Protection Commissioner says spam is no longer biggest complaint
Elaine Edwards   *The Irish Times*   7 January 2014 00:00 GMT

While the revelations of whistleblower Edward Snowden about the surveillance activities of the United States National Security Agency (NSA) extended tentacles into the related area of data protection in 2013, regulators in the European Union spent most of the year wrestling with proposals to harmonise the law across 28 member states.

A new EU regulation, first tabled in a proposal by the European Commission in 2012, would place new responsibilities on the regulators and also on businesses throughout the union.

Negotiations have stalled and the regulation is now unlikely to scrape through before the European Parliament elections in May. But the proposals still on the table would, in theory, place an extra burden on Ireland's Data Protection Commissioner, Billy Hawkes.

The so-called one-stop shop mechanism would likely see him become the lead regulator in Europe for major multinationals with head offices in Ireland, including such companies as Facebook, Google and Apple.

In comments at a privacy conference in Brussels last month, Mr Hawkes indicated he did not relish the prospect of taking on the responsibility for regulating such multinationals for all citizens of the EU.

One-stop shop

Saying he would not view the one-stop shop "with any great enthusiasm", he suggested it would draw resources from dealing with complaints about the likes of telecommunications firms and others, which are a greater source of complaints to his office by Irish citizens.

"However, as a good European, which I try to be, I do accept the logic of the one-stop shop and I will accept the consequences and the burdens that go with it," he said.

Speaking at his office in Portarlington before that conference, Mr Hawkes said he was already prioritising for attention those companies operating across the EU for which processing of personal data was core to their activities.

"Depending on, obviously, the number of the companies involved - and certainly if many more companies were to declare to be established in Ireland for data protection purposes - we would require more resources to be able to discharge our oversight responsibilities."

He welcomed what he said was a clear commitment by Minister for Justice Alan Shatter to ensure he was adequately resourced for any new responsibilities - though again it remained to be seen what will emerge.

Privacy campaigners such as the Austrian-based Europe v Facebook group believe his office has not been sufficiently robust in its enforcement actions.

The group, led by Max Schrems, is seeking judicial review of Mr Hawkes's decision not to pursue complaints made to his office about the gathering of personal data under the NSA's Prism programme from US firms based here. Mr Hawkes is also in the process of making formal decisions on 22 earlier complaints by the group relating to the privacy policies of Facebook, which underwent a major audit by his office two years ago.

Light-touch regulation

Mr Hawkes cautiously describes the approach taken by the complainants as "forceful" and, not for the first time, rejects the suggestion of "light touch" regulation by his office.

"One thing we certainly don't have is a light touch," he said. "We have a very rigorous approach to oversight of organisations but we do try to use the resources that are given to us in an intelligent way. It does not necessarily involve always hiring more people on our staff. It can also involve using outside expertise to help us in particular areas."

His office is completing an audit of the online professional networking service LinkedIn, which has European offices here. This year it will carry out an audit of Apple Ireland.

Mr Hawkes points out that Irish citizens tend not to complain about companies such as Google, which control huge amounts of their personal data.

Google, which has its European office in Dublin, is facing a co-ordinated action by other European data protection authorities over changes announced to its privacy policies last year. It was recently fined €900,000 by the Spanish data protection authority, which said the "highly ambiguous" language Google used in its privacy policy made it hard for people to find out what would happen to their data.

The Dutch data protection authority also recently said some of Google's policies were not in compliance with Dutch law. The company said it had engaged with both

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