

BREAKING: RUSSIANS CLAIM THEY'VE FOUND EXTRATERRESTRIAL LIFE TO TAMPER WITH OUR ELECTIONS

Russians secretly found what might be a sign of life coming from a star 95 light years away and people are in a tizzy.

An international team of scientists from the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI) is investigating mysterious signal spikes emitting from a 6.3-billion-year-old star in the constellation Hercules—95 light years away from Earth. The implications are extraordinary and point to the possibility of a civilization far more advanced than our own.

The unusual signal was originally detected on May 15, 2015, by the Russian Academy of Science-operated RATAN-600 radio telescope in Zelenchukskaya, Russia, but was kept secret from the international community. Interstellar space reporter Paul Gilster broke the story after the researchers quietly circulated a paper announcing the detection of “a strong signal in the direction of HD164595.”

It turns out, however, that the story got way overhyped.

“No one is claiming that this is the work of an extraterrestrial civilization, but it is certainly worth further study,” wrote Paul Glister, who covers deep space exploration on the website Centauri Dreams. He seems to have missed headlines like “Alien

Hunters Spot Freaky Radio Signal Coming From Nearby Star," "Is Earth Being Contacted by ALIENS? Mystery Radio Signals Come From a Sun-like Star" and "SETI Investigating Mysterious, Extraterrestrial Signal From Deep Space Star System."

[snip]

"God knows who or what broadcasts at 11 GHz, and it would not be out of the question that some sort of bursting communication is done between ground stations and satellites," he told *Ars Technica*, explaining that the signal was observed in the radio spectrum used by the military. "I would follow it if I were the astronomers, but I would also not hype the fact that it may be at SETI signal given the significant chance it could be something military."

In other words, there's a good chance the signal is the product of terrestrial activity rather than a missive crafted by extraterrestrial life on a distant exoplanet. For those who prefer a different outcome, there are plenty of movies that can offer more thrilling narratives.

So in the spirit of the silly season that our election has become, I'm going to go one better, taking the word "Russia" and some very thin evidence and declare this an election year plot. Everything else that has thin evidence and the word Russia is an election year plot, after all.

Consider the latest panic, caused by someone leaking Michael Isikoff an FBI alert on two attacks on voter files that took place this summer. Isikoff wasted no time in finding a cyber contractor willing to sow panic about Russians stealing the election.

The FBI has uncovered evidence that foreign hackers penetrated two state

election databases in recent weeks, prompting the bureau to warn election officials across the country to take new steps to enhance the security of their computer systems, according to federal and state law enforcement officials.

The FBI warning, contained in a “flash” alert from the FBI’s Cyber Division, a copy of which was obtained by Yahoo News, comes amid heightened concerns among U.S. intelligence officials about the possibility of cyberintrusions, potentially by Russian state-sponsored hackers, aimed at disrupting the November elections.

[snip]

“This is a big deal,” said Rich Barger, chief intelligence officer for ThreatConnect, a cybersecurity firm, who reviewed the FBI alert at the request of Yahoo News. “Two state election boards have been popped, and data has been taken. This certainly should be concerning to the common American voter.”

Barger noted that one of the IP addresses listed in the FBI alert has surfaced before in Russian criminal underground hacker forums. He also said the method of attack on one of the state election systems – including the types of tools used by the hackers to scan for vulnerabilities and exploit them – appears to resemble methods used in other suspected Russian state-sponsored cyberattacks, including one just this month on the World Anti-Doping Agency.

Ellen Nakashima claimed the FBI had stated “Russians” were behind the attack and then talked about how Russia (rather than journalists overhyping the story) might raise questions about the integrity of our elections.

Hackers targeted voter registration systems in Illinois and Arizona, and the FBI alerted Arizona officials in June that Russians were behind the assault on the election system in that state.

The bureau described the threat as “credible” and significant, “an eight on a scale of one to 10,” Matt Roberts, a spokesman for Arizona Secretary of State Michele Reagan (R), said Monday. As a result, Reagan shut down the state’s voter registration system for nearly a week.

It turned out that the hackers had not compromised the state system or even any county system. They had, however, stolen the username and password of a single election official in Gila County.

Roberts said FBI investigators did not specify whether the hackers were criminals or employed by the Russian government.

[snip]

Until now, countries such as Russia and China have shown little interest in voting systems in the United States. But experts said that if a foreign government gained the ability to tamper with voter data – for instance by deleting registration records – such a hack could cast doubt on the legitimacy of U.S. elections.

She also cites the same Barger fellow that Isikoff did who might make a buck off sowing fear.

Then Politico quoted an FBI guy and someone who works with state election officials (who are not on the normal circulation lists for these alerts) stating that an alert of a kind that often goes to other recipients but which because we’ve recently decided election systems are

critical infrastructure is now going to election officials is unprecedented.

But some cyber experts said the FBI's alert, first revealed by Yahoo News on Monday, could be a sign that investigators are worried that foreign actors are attempting a wide-scale digital onslaught.

A former lead agent in the FBI's Cyber Division said the hackers' use of a particular attack tool and the level of the FBI's alert "more than likely means nation-state attackers." The alert was coded "Amber," designating messages with sensitive information that "should not be widely distributed and should not be made public," the ex-official said.

One person who works with state election officials called the FBI's memo "completely unprecedented."

"There's never been an alert like that before that we know of," said the person, who requested anonymity to discuss sensitive intergovernmental conversations.

Multiple former officials and security researchers said the cyberattacks on Arizona's and Illinois' voter databases could be part of a suspected Russian attempt to meddle in the U.S. election, a campaign that has already included successful intrusions at major Democratic Party organizations and the selective leaking of documents embarrassing to Democrats. Hillary Clinton's campaign has alleged that the digital attacks on her party are an effort by Russian President Vladimir Putin's regime to sway the election to GOP nominee Donald Trump. Moscow has denied any involvement.

Then David Sanger used a logically flawed Harry

Reid letter calling for an investigation to sow more panic about the election (question: why is publishing accurate DNC documents considered “propaganda”?).

It turns out the evidence from the voting records hacks in the FBI alert suggests the hacks involved common tools that could have been deployed by anyone, and the Russian services were just one of several included in the hack.

Those clued-in to the incidents already knew that SQL Injection was the likely cause of attack, as anyone familiar with the process could read between the lines when it came to the public statements.

The notion that attackers would use public VPS / VPN providers is also a common trick, so the actual identity of the attacker remains a mystery. Likewise, the use of common SQL Injection scanners isn’t a big shock either.

The interesting takeaway in all of this is that a somewhat sensitive memo was leaked to the press. The source of the leak remains unknown, but flash memos coded to any severity other than Green rarely wind-up in the public eye. Doing so almost certainly sees access to such information revoked in the future.

And yet, there is nothing overly sensitive about the IOCs contained in this memo. The public was already aware of the attacks, and those in the industry were certain that something like SQL Injection was a possible factor. All this does is prove their hunches correct.

As for the attribution, that’s mostly fluff and hype, often used to push an agenda. Those working in the trenches rarely care about the *Who*, they’re more interested in *What* and *How*, so they can fix things and get the business back to

operational status.

And Motherboard notes that stealing voter data is sort of common.

On Monday, Yahoo reported the FBI had uncovered evidence that foreign hackers had breached two US state election databases earlier this month. The article, based on a document the FBI distributed to concerned parties, was heavily framed around other recent hacks which have generally been attributed to Russia, including the Democratic National Committee email dump.

The thing is, voter records are not some extra-special commodity that only elite, nation-sponsored hackers can get hold of. Instead, ordinary cybercriminals trade this sort of data, and some states make it pretty easy to obtain voter data through legal means anyway.

In December of last year, CSO Online reported that a database of some 191 million US voter records had been exposed online. They weren't grabbed through hacking, per se: the dump was available to anyone who knew where to look, or was happy to just cycle through open databases sitting on the internet (which, incidentally, common cybercriminals are).

In other words, by all appearances there is no evidence to specifically tie these hacks even to Russian criminals, much less the Russian state. But the prior panic about the DNC hack led to a lower trigger for alerts on a specific kind of target, voter rolls, which in turn has fed the panic such that most news outlets have some kind of story suggesting this is a Russian plot to steal our election (by stealing 200K voter files?). It's like finding Russian life on Mars based on the shadows you see in the sand.

It's not the Russians who are raising questions about the voting integrity – beyond questions that have persistently been raised for 15 years which have already *justifiably* lowered confidence in our voting system. It is shitty reporting.

So I'm going to join in. These ETs 95 light years away? I'm positive they want to steal our election.