

MONDAY MORNING: SWIVEL, HEADS

Somebody out there knows what this tune means in my household. For our purposes this Monday morning, it's a reminder to take a look around – all the way around. Something might be gaining on you.

Let's look...

Android users: Be more vigilant about apps from Google Play

Better check your data usage and outbound traffic. Seems +300 “porn clicker” apps worked their way around Google Play’s app checking process. The apps rack up traffic, fraudulently earning advertising income; they persist because of users’ negligence in vetting and monitoring downloaded apps (because Pr0N!) and weakness in Google’s vetting. If this stuff gets on your Android device, what else is on it?

IRS’ data breach bigger than first reported

This may also depend on when first reporting occurred. The number of taxpayers affected is now ~700,000 according to the IRS this past Friday, which is considerably larger than the ~464,000 estimated in January this year. But the number of taxpayers affected has grown steadily since May 15th last year and earlier.

Did we miss the ‘push for exotic new weapons’?

Nope. Those of us paying attention haven’t missed the Defense Department’s long-running efforts developing new tools and weapons based on robotics and artificial intelligence. If anything, folks paying attention notice how little the investment in DARPA has yielded in payoff, noting non-defense development moving faster, further, cheaper – a la SuitX’s \$40K exoskeleton, versus decades-plus investment by DARPA in exoskeleton vaporware. But apparently last Tuesday’s op-ed by David Ignatius in WaPo on the development of “new exotic weapons” that may be deployed against China and Russia spawned

fresh discussion to draw our attention to this work. THAT is the new development – not the weapons, but the chatter, beginning with the Pentagon and eager beaver reporter-repeaters. This bit here, emphasis mine:

Pentagon officials **have started talking openly** about using the latest tools of artificial intelligence and machine learning to create robot weapons, “human-machine teams” and enhanced, super-powered soldiers. It may sound like science fiction, but Pentagon officials say they have concluded that such high-tech systems are the best way to combat rapid improvements by the Russian and Chinese militaries.

Breathless, much? Come the feck on. We’ve been waiting decades for these tools and weapons after throwing billions of dollars down this dark rathole called DARPA, and we’ve yet to see anything commercially viable in the way of an exoskeleton in the field. And don’t point to SKYNET and ask us to marvel at machine learning, because the targeting failure rate is so high, it’s proven humans behind it aren’t learning more and faster than the machines are.

Speaking of faster development outside DARPA: Disney deploying anti-drones?

The Star Wars franchise represents huge bank – multiple billions – to its owner Disney. Control of intellectual property during production is paramount, to ensure fan interest remains high until the next film is released. It’s rumored Disney has taken measures to reduce IP poaching by fan drones, possibly including anti-drones managed by a security firm protecting the current production location in Croatia. I give this rumor more weight than the Pentagon’s buzz about exoskeletons on the battlefield.

Lickety-split quickies

- Logistics behemoth Amazon
now targeting grocery

deliveries in the UK
(TechCrunch)

Bet Tesco is peeved off it gave up the two warehouse buildings Amazon's now using in its roll out with grocery chain Morrisons.

- Check your bias: Just another pretty face, not necessarily a smarter one (Ars Technica)

Humans assume people with more attractive features are smarter, according to a recent study. Tests, removing other bias for race, comparing actual intellectual performance, show attractiveness isn't proof of smarts. Duh. The question now: why the bias?

- India's Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DEITY) tells Google's Project Loon pick a partner provider

Google's balloon-delivered wireless broadband project can proceed once it picks a ground-based telecom network with which to work. DEITY has been receptive to Project Loon as Google has not walled off any part of the internet under its brand – unlike Facebook. (The Register)

- Phys.Org asks, Can we trust police drones?
As much as we can trust police dash cameras and police body cameras – they are only as trustworthy as the persons using them and the law enforcement department employing them.
- Scientists developed a theory on how ideas go viral
Using epidemiological models, scientists built a model of virality. Skepticism proved an infection control method.
(Phys.org)

That's a wrap – keep your eyes peeled. To quote Ferris Bueller, "Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it."