

Espionage and Computer Hacking

Since the national news is filled with stories on espionage and computer hacking, here are my reflections on the two subjects. When I enlisted in the Air Force, I took the Armed Forces Qualification Tests and did well enough to qualify for a language test in basic training. I must have done well on that too, since I received orders to go to an Intensive Russian program at the University of Indiana. Following that were two programs in military Russian and Intelligence Analysis. I was stationed in northern Japan for two years working as a linguist and analyst from 1964 to 1968. I learned how good our electronic intelligence really was. We were able to copy Russian military transmissions including ground to ground, ground to air and air to air in aircraft which was my specialty. We also were able to intercept and decode transmissions. We were even able to decode transmissions in the Russian space and missile program. The Russian Air Defense Command changed codes about every four weeks. We were normally more comfortable decoding them before the Russians were comfortable using the new coding. There is no doubt in my mind that the US still has those capabilities. Our intelligence community does know what is going on in foreign countries. The group of men I worked with were all hard-working and smart. I do believe our intelligence community when they say the Russians have hacked into our computer systems.

After my discharge, I earned the first Bachelor's degree in Computer Science from MSUM and have worked in the field over 40 years. Since President Obama announced retaliation for the Russian hacking, I've been thinking of what that might be, so here is my analysis of what might and might not work. First, the obvious retaliation would be to attach the Russian electronic grid and shut down power in major areas of Russia. It could be done but there would be deaths in hospitals, nursing homes, etc. It would not touch President Putin. Second might be to hack into the Russian airline reservation system, It could be done, but it would also impact flights throughout the world and would not touch President Putin. Third might be to hack into the government's e-mail system and obtain embarrassing data. However, Putin does not appear to be easily embarrassed. Therefore, my recommendation is to hack into Putin's financial accounts and make some large scale fund transfers to secret accounts located in the Cayman Islands. Putin is reported to be worth over \$200 billion. Transferring \$100 billion from his holdings would make an impression. Can't you image his reaction when he gets an e-mail confirming the fund transfer of \$100 billion to an unknown account somewhere? That would get his attention, action and could easily be reversed with no harm to anyone, except Putin. Could it be done? Yes, I believe it could. Счастли́вый Рожде́ство, Влади́мир (Happy Christmas, Vladimir)