

FILE

RELEASE IN PART  
B1, 1.4(G), 1.4(E), B7(C), B6



REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior  
Reviewer

~~SECRET//REL TO FVEY~~  
DECL: 02/22/2026

INFORMATION MEMO FOR THE SECRETARY

FROM: DS - Eric J. Boswell

SUBJECT: ~~(S//REL)~~ Compromise of Officials' Personal E-mail Accounts

~~(S//REL)~~ Threat analysis by the DS cyber security team and related incident reports indicate a dramatic increase since January 2011 in attempts by [redacted] to compromise the private home e-mail accounts of senior Department officials. The actors, [redacted]

1.4(E)  
1.4(G)  
B1

[redacted] are targeting senior United States government officials and their staffs. Victims include personnel at the Ambassadorial, Assistant Secretary, and Under Secretary levels at DoS, EOP, DoD, DOJ, Treasury, and the U.S. Senate. The attachment provides a snapshot of affected Department personnel: many of the email account owners play major roles in forming diplomatic and economic policy. Secretary Gates and others are being briefed on malicious activity within their organizations.

~~(S//REL)~~ Specifically, the actors are sending cleverly forged e-mails to victims' private web-based accounts (e.g., Gmail, Hotmail, Yahoo). These "spear phishing" messages appear to be sent by U.S. government officials but are designed to trick recipients into activating embedded malicious code by clicking on an attachment or link. Although the targets are unclassified, personal e-mail accounts, the likely objective is to compromise user accounts and thereby gain access to policy documents and personal information that could enable technical surveillance and possibly blackmail. The personal e-mail of family members also is at risk.

~~(S//REL)~~ DS is working directly with affected Department officials and defending against this activity on OpenNet. We also urge Department users to minimize the use of personal web e-mail for business, as some compromised home systems have been reconfigured by these actors to automatically forward copies of all composed e-mails to an undisclosed recipient. DS stands ready to brief you on the full scope of these [redacted] cyber espionage campaigns.

1.4(E)  
1.4(G)  
B1

Attachment:

~~(S//REL)~~ Personnel Targeted by [redacted] (as known 2/28/2011)

~~SECRET//REL TO FVEY~~

Classified by: DS, Assistant Secretary Eric J. Boswell  
E.O. 13526, Reasons: 1.4 (e) and (g)

DS 34

Drafted: DS/SI/CS/CTAD - [redacted]  
(After hours POC: [redacted])

B6  
B7(C)

Approved: DS Assistant Secretary - Eric J. Boswell

Cleared: DS/DSS - [redacted] (ok)  
DS/SI - DReid (ok)  
DS/SI/CS - [redacted] (ok)  
DS/CS/CTAD - [redacted] (ok)  
D(S) - [redacted] (ok)  
D(L) - [redacted] (ok)  
P - [redacted] (ok)  
S/P - [redacted] (ok)  
M - [redacted] (ok)  
G - [redacted] (ok)  
IRM - [redacted] (ok)  
E - [redacted] (info)  
I - [redacted] (ok)  
INR - [redacted] (ok)  
S/CCI - [redacted] (ok)

B6  
B7(C)