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SECURITY ALERT

RUSSIAN PASSWORD HACK: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

A U.S. security firm has uncovered what appears to be the largest Internet security breach in recent memory, conducted by a group of Russia-based hackers. The firm conducted an 18-month investigation into the breach, revealing the online gang stole 1.2 billion username and password combos, as well as more than 500 million email addresses.

The hackers ultimately scooped upwards of 4.5 billion records, using computers with viruses that allowed a single operator to control a large group of affected systems and test websites for particular vulnerabilities. When such a vulnerability was discovered, the hackers were then able to send malicious commands to a website and steal its data, including usernames and passwords.

The group managed to steal information from 420,000 web and FTP sites.