



Hackers Steal Data of 100,000 US Taxpayers



WASHINGTON (Press TV) – More than 100,000 taxpayers in the United States have had their personal information stolen from a US government website, the latest data theft that has alarmed American consumers.

Tax return information for about 100,000 taxpayers was illegally accessed by cyber criminals over the past four months, Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Commissioner John Koskinen said on Tuesday.

The IRS said information from those tax forms was used to file fraudulent returns and the agency sent nearly \$50 million in refunds before it detected the scheme.

Hackers sought to gain access to

IRS Commissioner John Koskinen personal tax information 200,000 times through the IRS “Get Transcript” online application and about half of those attempts were successful, Koskinen told a news conference.

“We’re confident these are not amateurs. These are actually organized crime syndicates that not only we but everyone in the financial industry are dealing with,” Koskinen said.

“Eighty percent of the identity theft we’re dealing with and refund fraud is related to organized crime here and around the world,” he added. “These are extremely sophisticated criminals with access to a tremendous amount of data.”

The IRS commissioner said he could not comment on who the cyber attackers might be, and a criminal investigation was ongoing.

Koskinen also said the attackers must have already had a significant amount of personal information about the taxpayers, including birth dates, addresses and Social Security numbers.

“This is a wake-up call that breaches have a compounding effect and the stakes are getting higher,” said Eric Chiu, a security expert who is the president of HyTrust, a cloud computing security company.

Cleveland Agrees To Limit Police Use of Force



Cleveland policemen block the street outside the Justice Center in Cleveland, Ohio, May 23, 2015.

CLEVELAND (Reuters) – The Cleveland police department has agreed to train officers to minimize racial bias and the use of excessive force in a deal with the U.S. Department of Justice after a pattern of abuses was detailed in a report last year, officials said on Tuesday.

The agreement, which requires the approval of a federal judge, would also provide a road map for changes to other departments as policing across the United States has become a flashpoint for racial tensions.

“It will define who we are as a people and who we are as a city,” Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson told a news conference.

Authorities made the announcement about strict oversight of the Cleveland police three days after a judge acquitted a white city police officer of manslaughter charges in the fatal shooting of an unarmed black couple in 2012. The couple, Timothy Russell and Malissa Williams, were in a car and were shot by officer Michael Brelo after a lengthy chase by police.

Saturday’s verdict led to protests, the latest demonstrations over deaths of black men at the hands of police, most recently in Baltimore.

Under the agreement, Cleveland’s police department will be tracked by a monitor either agreed to by the city and Justice Department or named by a federal judge. A civilian will head the department’s internal affairs division.

U.S. Attorney Steven Dettelbach said the rules issued under a con-

sent decree build on what is good in the department and aims to improve policing where it has lagged.

The Justice Department concluded a 21-month investigation in December that found the Cleveland police engaged in widespread use of excessive force.

The investigation found incidents of officers shooting civilians in the head when deadly force was not justified and dealing too forcefully with the mentally ill.

Less than two weeks before the report was released, a Cleveland police officer fatally shot 12-year-old Tamir Rice, who turned out to be carrying a replica handgun that fires plastic pellets.

Cleveland agreed to training officers in strategies to avoid biased policing, or the perception of biased actions, and avoid implicit biases. The city will analyze data on stops, searches and seizures to eliminate unconstitutional police practices.

“The essential component, and where the rubber really meets the road, is the community policing component,” Cleveland Police Chief Calvin Williams said.

The agreement outlines over several pages when and now officers should use force and requires officers to provide first aid and obtain medical care after an incident.

Officers normally will not use force against handcuffed or otherwise restrained persons, or strike their heads with hard objects when lethal force is unjustified, it said.

WASHINGTON (Press TV) – Republican presidential candidate Senator Rand Paul says the hawkish members of his party are responsible for the creation of the ISIL Takfiri terrorists in the Middle East.

Paul blamed hawks like Senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham for the creation of ISIL, saying the group “exists and grew stronger because of the hawks in our party who gave arms indiscriminately, and most of those arms were snatched up by ISIL (ISIL).”

Talking to MSNBC on Wednesday, Paul said, “These hawks also wanted to bomb [Syrian President Bashar] Assad, which would have made ISIL’s job even easier. They’ve created these people.”

Senator Graham, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said formerly that he advocated sending around 10,000 US troops to Iraq to help train and support militants fighting ISIL.

Graham is expected to announce his White House bid next Monday.

“Right now there are 1,500 groups, many of them bad people, including ISIL, that hawks in our party have been arming,” Paul noted.

The US and its allies have been conducting airstrikes against ISIL in Iraq and Syria last year. However, the terror network is controlling large parts of the two countries.

The terrorists managed to capture Ramadi, the capital city of Iraq’s Anbar Province, last week.

CANBERRA (Press TV) – About 2.5 million Australians are living in poverty, with many trying to survive on just \$18 (14 USD) a day after accommodation expenses, the Salvation Army charity organization says.

The survey of people visiting the Salvation Army’s centers around Australia for help shows that one in four missed at least one meal a day; half said their situation was worse than a year ago, and 60 percent of children reported severe deprivation.

“We are deeply alarmed at the findings of this survey,” The Salvation Army spokesman Major Bruce Harmer said, adding that “Without sufficient financial investment ... the situation for disadvantaged individuals is likely to remain unchanged or further deteriorate.”

According to the charity which has more than 1.5 million members worldwide, About 2.5 million Australians are estimated to be living under the poverty line. Half of Australians couldn’t afford up-to-date school books or out-of-school activities for their children.

The survey found 75 percent of respondents had cut down on basic necessities, 68 percent went without dental treatment and 37 percent went without medical treatment.

The Salvation Army said the results painted an alarming picture of what was happening to many marginalized Australians.

BERLIN (Press TV) – German Chancellor Angela Merkel deceived her people about an inclination by the United States to sign a no-spy agreement with Germany, according to a new report.

The high-circulation daily Sueddeutsche Zeitung reported on Wednesday that Merkel’s claims in the run-up to the general elections in 2013 regarding Washington’s readiness to stop espionage on Berlin had been totally fake.

The report, which is based on some confidential documents seen by some German broadcasters, said that Merkel was aware at the time that the US would not agree to refrain from spying, but she, along with members of her government, still led the public to believe that this would be the case.

According to a document, which has also been seen by Merkel, Germany’s then-foreign minister Guido Westerwelle received “no concrete confirmation” from US Secretary of State John Kerry after asking him about the possibility of such an agreement between Berlin and Washington.

Merkel has repeatedly been criticized in the German media about her deceptive methods of handling the controversial US espionage case with many saying that she has tried to mislead the public about the deep layers of cooperation between the US National Security Agency (NSA) and the German intelligence service BND.

Japan, Philippines to Deepen Ties as China Asserts Sea Claims

TOKYO (Reuters) - Japan and the Philippines are set to bolster security ties when President Benigno Aquino visits Tokyo next week, the latest move by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to beef up cooperation with Southeast Asian nations facing China’s growing naval ambitions.

The two sides will likely agree to start talks on a framework for the transfer of defense equipment and technology and to discuss a possible pact on the status of Japanese military personnel visiting the Philippines to facilitate joint training and exercises, officials involved in the talks said.

Aquino’s June 2-5 trip to Japan follows Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak’s visit this week, during which the two leaders agreed to upgrade ties to a strategic partnership and to cooperate in defense equipment.

Philippine Defence Secretary Voltaire Gazmin will accompany Aquino.

The Philippines has already handed Japan a list of Japanese defense equipment it wants to acquire such as P-3C maritime surveillance aircraft that Tokyo is replacing with newer planes, a senior Philippine naval officer told Reuters.

list to Japan, what equipment the Philippines needs urgently to boost our maritime security” in the South China Sea, he said, adding Manila was in discussion with Tokyo over a package of soft loans to purchase the kit.

Under Abe’s leadership, Japan

most of the South China Sea, through which much of Japan’s ship-borne trade passes. The Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, Taiwan and Brunei have overlapping claims.

Beijing on Tuesday outlined a strategy to boost its naval reach



Philippines’ President Benigno Aquino

last year eased its restrictions on arms exports, and is now seen as the frontrunner to sign a contract to supply next generation submarines to Australia.

Tokyo already has agreements on defense equipment and technology transfers with the United States, Britain, Australia and France and a similar pact with Manila is needed to allow it to export to the Philippines. China claims sovereignty over

amid growing criticism from Washington and some Asian countries over its rapid creation of artificial islands in the Spratly archipelago of the South China Sea.

Abe’s defense minister, Gen Nakatani, has repeatedly said the situation in the South China Sea is having a bigger impact on Japan’s security and that Tokyo needs to consider how to respond.

US, S Korea, Japan Meet to Revive Korean Talks

SEOUL (Press TV) – Top nuclear envoys from South Korea, the United States and Japan have met in Seoul seeking a way forward to revive long-stalled, six-party talks with North Korea on its nuclear program.

“We are facing the continuing advancement of North Korea’s nuclear and missile capabilities,” Hwang Joon-kook, South Korea’s special representative for Korean Peninsula peace and security affairs, said on Wednesday before the meeting with Sung Kim, the US special representative for North Korea policy, and Junichi Ihara, a regional director-general in the Japanese Foreign Ministry.

The one-day meeting in Seoul came after Pyongyang announced on May 9 that it had successfully conducted an underwater test-fire of a ballistic missile, describing it as a “world level strategic weapon.”

questioned the authenticity of the photos released by North Korea following the test.

Seoul, Washington and Tokyo are members of now stalled six-nation negotiations aimed at ending North Korea’s nuclear program in return for aid and political concessions.

The six-party negotiations, which included Russia, China, the United States, Japan, South Korea and North Korea, stalled in April 2009 after the United Nations imposed tougher sanctions on Pyongyang for conducting nuclear and missile tests.

North Korea is under UN sanctions over launching rockets considered by the West as ballistic missiles aimed at delivering nuclear warheads.

Pyongyang says its numerous missile tests, slammed mainly by the US and South Korea, seek to boost the North’s defense capabilities in the face of enemy threats. However, some Westerners have