Cyber Espionage: **Is it delusion?** OVERVIEW

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Cyber espionage is the stealing of secrets stored in digital formats or on computers and IT networks[1] and it is on the rise, with targets varying from government agencies to power and other utility providers to any other organisation holding highly confidential data or information of commercial value, or data of value to competitors.

The British Government reports that 93% of large corporations and 76% of small ones have reported a cyber breach in the past year[2]. Accurate figures are hard to find since 'few in government or business will admit the full extent of the break-ins,' says the ABC, 'with one expert calling it a "dirty little secret"[3].

ADVANCED, PERSISTENT AND UNDETECTABLE

Most recent cyber attacks have used 'Advanced Persistent Threats' (APTs) which are often successful in evading detection by conventional IT security defences. The advance is gradual and the repeated attacks establish a permanent foothold for future exploits that can persist for years.

You probably have a full array of defences so how do attackers get through? Firstly, it could be phishing attacks let in by your own people. Secondly, the attacks use custom-built malware that won't be detected by most security systems. Rules based 'detect and prevent' techniques are next to powerless against APT attacks.

SMARTER CROOKS, SMARTER DEFENCES

These days cyber espionage is big business for organized syndicates, with malware designed to steal information for significant profits. If it's a case of 'you will be targeted' then gaining early warning will be much more useful than discovering an attack months after the damage is done. Intelligent behaviour-based systems learn the normal patterns of activity across the enterprise; they detect those that are unusual, interpret them in context and alert IT security staff to investigate

Real -time, behavioural capability adds a layer of intelligence to existing security systems, enabling organisations in the modern era to match wits with smart, modern attackers.

> *'Companies that think they're unlikely to be attacked are deluding themselves.'*
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> **Economist Research Unit 2012**

1 Cyber Espionage defined. Financial Times Lexicon

2 Closing the Net on cyber criminals, The Independent, May 24, 2013

3 Hacked! 4 Corners, May 27, 2013

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