



Malta urged to investigate illegalities

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CONFIRMED – Over 20,000 government passwords stolen

KARL SCHEMBRI

IT minister Austin Gatt yesterday admitted that more than 20,000 passwords were stolen from the government IT agency, MITTS.

In a shocking declaration he gave in the House of Representatives yesterday night after a month of denials, Gatt revealed that the usernames and passwords of all the MITTS users – from Members of Parliament to ministries, government agencies and departments – were extracted illegally last September.

Although MITTS technicians were alerted to problems on the government server on 4 September, it took them until 24 September to realise that all the passwords had been stolen.

The illegal theft was confirmed by American security experts last week.

In an 11-page statement, the minister admitted that on 4 September 2008 at around 10am, technical operators at the Network Operations Centre (NOC) situated at Gattard House in

Blata l-Bajda, noticed that one of the data servers was “manifesting performance problems”.

The server contained the usernames and passwords of all the MITTS clients.

By 5pm of the same day, the technicians found that the server was operating an unauthorised programme that was intended to illegally extract all the usernames and passwords on the server and transmit them elsewhere.

Upon the identification of the programme, the NOC administrator informed the executive management of the investigations that were carried until that time.

On the following day, the MITTS chief executive officer Alex Attard appointed MITTS officials of the Information Security and Risk Management Department (ISRM) – who also serve on the National Information Security Authority – to take control of the internal investigation into the incident.

ISRM started immediate investigations, while the executive management started interviewing NOC employees to establish

the involvement of staff on duty on the day of the incident.

From the investigation, it emerged that a similar programme to the one executed on 4 September was also executed on 2 and 3 September on the same server.

In the three cases, it was found that the username and password of one of the MITTS team leaders who formed part of NOC, and who had administrator rights on the server, were used to access the server involved in the incident.

On 5 and 6 September, ISRM carried out a total scan of all the computers linked to the government network, to establish if the same programme was present on other computers. In fact, a copy of the programme was found on two other computers: one on the server of the Maltese Embassy in Cairo and the other on a computer at the Mater Dei Hospital.

The Mater Dei computer was elevated by ISRM, which was also found to have hidden inside a number of CDs with software that was similar to that found operating

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Austin Gatt accuses Alfred Sant of ‘spinning story through MaltaToday’ to mislead police investigations

Chaos in the House as Sant claims Breach of Privilege by Gatt

Gatt refuses resignation from all MITTS board members - CEO goes on holiday

POLI-STRINA, Caqnu does charity



MATTHEW VELLA

MALTA'S biggest charity spectacular, l-Istrina, has courted the benevolence of none other than the island's most controversial construction magnate, Charles Polidano 'ic-Caqnu', who is this year's organiser of the Christmas charity fest.

Polidano's company MK Leisure has joined up with TV production company Take 2, to produce this year's edition of l-Istrina, a former mainstay of TV company Where's Everybody.

Although this marks the end of Joe Azzopardi's marathon tub-thumping for good causes,

the Where's Everybody legacy does not stop here.

A former WE production assistant, Abigail Mallia is the director of Take 2, the company she formed with Carlos Debatista after the demise of Four People, producers of award-winning drama Gizelle.

She now has teamed up with the employers of her father, theatre director Salvu Mallia, who is artistic director at MK Leisure.

MK Leisure is an events company which provides outside catering for corporate events and weddings, historical re-enactments, and other themed events at the Montekristo wineries, where l-Istrina will be broadcast from this year.

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