

Dutch secret service tries to recruit Tor-admin

Recently a Dutch man with an MSc (Master of Science) at the Delft University of Technology and admin of Tor-exit nodes was approached by two agents of the Dutch intelligence service, the AIVD. They wanted to recruit the man as an informant or undercover agent, who would also infiltrate foreign hacker communities. The person tells his story.

We received this story from a person who wants to remain anonymous. We conducted an investigation to the existence of this person and confirmed their existence. The person did not want to answer additional questions about the conversation held with the Dutch secret service (AIVD for its initials in Dutch) and wanted to remain anonymous. We respect this. We publish this account because we think the story is important both for the hackers community and beyond. The person has written the story in English, which we have edited without changing the contents. We have also translated it into Dutch with some slight clarification in relation to some comments, again without changing the contents.

Stories about recruitments are complex because they take place between the authorities and a civilian. The authorities will never reveal any information about these encounters. The effects of an attempt to recruit someone or recruitments can be severe. This is the experience of Buro Jansen & Janssen in dealing 35 years with the practices of the secret service and recruitments.

People who are recruited are mostly selected by the secret service, generally because they can easily be influenced, are vulnerable and/or unstable. This can be part of someone's personality, as a result of events in someone's life just before the recruitment, or in other moments in his or her life. These effects in some cases have resulted in moments of vulnerability and/or instability or

tendencies to be easily influenced. Secret services abuse these weaknesses of people, surprise people, show people that they know a lot about their lives, threaten them with that knowledge and threaten people not to share their experiences with others.

The agents Rob de Vries and Fatma threatened the person who wrote this account not to make it public. This threat has no moral or legal basis. If the secret service tries to recruit you, talk to your friends about it, to fellow hackspace users, community members, acquaintances, family and other people or even better, publish your story.

Buro Jansen & Janssen

I'm a citizen of The Netherlands with a MSc at TU Delft. I run several Tor-exit nodes for research purposes and got a recent visit from the Dutch intelligence service. The agents were a male-female couple that visited me at a gym facility where I was having a drink and was expected thought to be alone.

This is what happened: They approached me and identified themselves with a badge of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and said they were working for the AIVD (Dutch secret service). They asked me to hear them out. I was in a state of shock and thought I had committed a crime but they immediately started to talk about on my studies. They made it clear they've read my thesis on IT security and showered me with compliments before they were firing a round of job offers at me. To summarize:

+ they're building out a unit called JSCU (Joint Sigint Cyber Unit) and approaching IT students (it seems they're already monitoring young students in the last years of college) and need somebody in their generation but yet somewhat older to direct the younger ones, "because they need oversight and only not DDoS sites without a directing team leader that is qualified in their own field."

+ they asked me if I was interested in traveling for a couple of years and for example work in Germany at a technology company while visiting the Chaos Computer Club's hacker spaces to see what's going on and report back to them. All my expenditures would be covered.

Here I should 'have realized they were trying to recruit me to spy in Germany but I was still in shock because I never thought secret agents would have an interest in me. I continued to listen as they continued offering different possibilities, probably hoping I would be interested in one of them.

+ They also mentioned that occasionally there are hacker parties in Italy, Austria, Spain, and other countries, and they said I could see that as paid holidays. They were very honest about the fact that they were looking for foreign talent but mostly interested in keeping tabs on Dutch IT-professionals and hackers abroad. They emphasized on monitoring Dutch people abroad at least 3 times.

+ They knew about my Tor-exit nodes, at least the woman did. The man didn't seem he had much technical knowledge. She was younger too, I think 25-30 years old, while he could have been her father. She asked how I paid for the Tor-nodes and I told her I run them in the cloud which is cost-effective. She asked what I think about expanding Tor-exit nodes in The Netherlands with all costs paid and no worries for any abuse complaints? I was startled and said: "I'm not sure if that's legal."

This is where I should have left my drink and walked away but they were clinging on to me and kept talking fast as if they knew I was about leave. The man told me: "you are not obliged to do anything, just to hear us out. If you work with us there are benefits, for example if we ask you to crash a system in a public place and you would be arrested for that, we make sure you don't get arrested and nobody will know about it, not even the police".

+ The man took over from the girl saying that if I'm not interested in managing students at their facility, maybe I should travel to one of the hacking conferences to think things over, without directly infiltrating hackerspaces. He said they were mostly interested in building a community of techies around the developers of Tor and

Tails and that it would be an international effort. This was an option that wouldn't require me to work with the Dutch secret service AIVD officially but voluntarily and I could state the expenses and determine my own salary. He said: "this is a possibility too, if you're not asking 5.000 euros a month but we cover travels too."

At this point they stopped talking and looked at me. I said I didn't know what to do, and that I was curious about how they found me. Why me? Now the compliments on my thesis resumed. They didn't reveal who led them to my thesis. I told them I was shocked and felt uneasy about the whole deal and wanted to leave.

Now the vibe changed and the girl tried once more: you really miss out working for us, nobody knows what we're doing and you can have access to new types of technology, we know you're interested in technology, aren't you? I will give you my number so you can think about it. While she was writing down her mobile number I said: I am not interested, period, I will go now and please don't bother me again. I think this was a big mistake because the old man who showered me with compliments suddenly said: "look, we know about your Tor-exit nodes, if you run them with us you will be able to make a living out of it, but if you don't and something illegal happens, we can't help you if the police visits your home and seizes your equipment."

I replied : "I'm not doing anything illegal." But he didn't care about what I said, he continued: "we recommend that you not speak to anybody about this because it's punishable by Article 60 of the law and it's too bad you've chosen this route."

He said: "We go." They stood up and she said: "You're really a smart guy, if you change your mind, give us a call. But thanks for hearing us out, that was really nice of you to just hear what we had to say." The old man didn't say anything and stretched out his hand to say goodbye.

I got home and I can't describe how I feel but I had a very bad night. Because I'm an ethical hacker I am sharing this story with you. It's for publication as I strongly believe they won't be knocking on my door again when it's published.

By the way their names were Rob de Vries and Fatma (no last name given) but these are probably fakes. The number wasn't a mobile number but the real public number of the which she memorized.

[Original *`this message is intended for publication, with the IT hacking community in mind`*]

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[AIVD benadert Tor-beheerder](#) (pdf Dutch translation)