



A software bug caused the early release of 3,200 US prisoners

December 30, 2015 By Pierluigi Paganini



The US Department of Corrections discovered a long-standing software bug that resulted in the early release of prisoners.

This news is disconcerting and demonstrates the importance to carefully consider the technology in our lives. The Washington State Department of Corrections (DoC) launched an investigation after it early released 3,200 prisoners over the course of 13 years.

It seems that a software bug present in the systems of the Department since 2002, caused errors in the calculation of time credits for the good behavior of individuals while imprisoned.

The bugs led errors in the calculation of sentence reductions for the US prisoners that had a good behavior, the experts estimated that in a 13-year period, the average number of days of those released early from prison was 49 days before the

“ This problem was a l
c o n t i n u e f o r 13 y e a r
d e e p l y d i s a p p o i n t i n g
t o t a l l y u n a c c e p t a b l e
f r a n k l y , m a d d e n i n g , ”
c o m m o e f n t h e W a s h i n g t o
S t a t e G o v e r n o r J a y I
“ I ’ v e [m a n y] q u e s t i o r
h o w a n d w h y t h i s h a p
a n d I u n d e r s t a n d t h
m e m b e r s o f t h e p u b l i
h a v e t h o s e s a m e q u e

Gov. Jay Inslee today already ordered the

Washington Department of Corrections to take the
necessary actions to discover the bug that allowed
criminals to leave the jail early.

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1241424	53555323154	64012345596	97901241424	53555323154	64012345596	97901241424	53555323154	64012345596	97901241424	53555323154	64012345596

The software bug was introduced in 2002, in that
year the state’s supreme court introduced a change
in the calculation of the “**good time**” credit system
for all the prisoners in State Prisons and County
jails,

Criteria for evaluating the good behavior of
prisoners were introduced to allow guests of state
prisons to reduce the period to be served.

The DoCs released a new version of software that
implemented the new rules, but it introduced also a
bug, but it is important to highlight that
the Department of Corrections (DoC) has been
informed of the software bug at least 3 years ago. In
December, 2012 in fact, the familiars of an assault
victim reported the issue to the Department of
Corrections.

The US Department of Corrections accepted the claim and filed a request ranking the error as “time sensitive.” This means that the US Department urged a solution as soon as possible, but something went wrong.

*“Between December 2012 and this month, the software fix “was repeatedly delayed,” according to a DOC timeline of events. The delays occurred despite the fact a DOC worker who filed the service request labeled the fix as time sensitive and “ASAP.” Reported the **SeattleTimes**. “Typically, IT fixes are put into a queue according to priority, said Brown. But, “What we know, I think, at a bare minimum, is the proper prioritization did not occur,” he said.”*

Three years to fix a time sensitive bug that could have effects on people security. Simply absurd!

Now something seems to be changing, Inslee assured that the software bug will be fixed within the January 7th.

Waiting for the fix, the US DOC has requested double checks before releasing any prisoner.

“The governor ordered DOC to halt all releases of impacted offenders from prison until a hand calculation is done to ensure the offender is being released on the correct date. A broader software fix is expected to be in place by Jan. 7, 2016.” continues the official statement.

“In addition, DOC is working swiftly to locate offenders who were released from prison prior to their actual earned release date and ensure they fulfill their sentences as required by law. In accordance with Supreme Court precedent, most of the offenders who were released early will be given with day for day credit for their time in the community. Depending on how much time they have left to serve, the offenders will go to work release or back to prison.”

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(Security Affairs – Department of Corrections, software bug)

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