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BROADCAST EXCERPT

DAVID HARTMAN: A group of young people in the Milwaukee area recently made headlines across the country because they were able to gain access -- it's called -- to one of our government's computers at a nuclear weapons laboratory in New Mexico. No classified information was released. And then, late last week, the FBI said that a member of the same computer group endangered the lives of some patients at Memorial Sloan Kettering Hospital, here in New York City, by tampering with that computer.

Our legal expert, Arthur Miller, will join me in just a moment, but first I would like for you to take a look at a conversation I had Friday with one of the members of this computer group. His name is Steve Rundel. He is 19 years old. He says he did not take part in either of those two computer raids, but he says he has broken into the computer of a life insurance company. I asked him why he taps into other organizations' computers.

STEVE RUNDEL: Well, it's a challenge, and it's a good educational experience. I (UNCLEAR) be a security programer, in the future, and it helps me to know how to do it better.

HARTMAN: All right. What do you do, after you get in? I mean, once you manage to get into that computer with your computer -- right?...

RUNDEL: Yeah.

HARTMAN: ...what do you do, then? What do you do with it, once you get there?

RUNDEL: Well, you examine the system -- how it works, how the files are structured, and what kind of information is stored

in it. And then, well, you (LAUGHS) you just use and just play around with it.

HARTMAN: Well, what about, for instance, the insurance company? When you got into -- what did you see, when you got into the insurance company computer files?

RUNDEL: Well, I checked it out, tried to figure out how the programs run, and everything, and a couple of ledgers were knocked off, because I figured they were...

HARTMAN: Now, what's that mean, a couple of ledgers were knocked off? What does that mean?

RUNDEL: Well, they had some ledger files on there.

HARTMAN: Right, so, what did you do? You mean you erased them, or you got rid of them, by mistake, or -- ?

RUNDEL: Yeah.

HARTMAN: Right? Was it by mistake? I mean, or do you --do you do some -- did you know you were going...

RUNDEL: Well, I was trying out some commands, to see if they worked, and they worked, and they...

HARTMAN: They worked?

RUNDEL: ...erased the files. Yeah.

HARTMAN: Without understanding -- and most of us don't --all the computer jargon, and how they work, how do you get in there? Something about phone numbers? Do you have to get a phone number, first?

RUNDEL: You just put your mode -- your computer to dial all these numbers, to...

HARTMAN: In other words, you put the area code in, and -- ?

RUNDEL: Yeah.

HARTMAN: And the computer really will dial the phone numbers.

RUNDEL: Yeah, until it finds a computer. Then it will let you know, and then you can try it out, later.

HARTMAN: All right, but -- all right, then you get that number for the computer; then, there's still security codes, right?

RUNDEL: Yeah.

HARTMAN: How do you get into those?

RUNDEL: Well, you can find -- you can use default passwords from -- that you know from these systems, from reading and from manuals, or intyped(?) help, and that will give you some information.

HARTMAN: How long can all this take?

RUNDEL: (STARTS TO SPEAK)

HARTMAN: I mean, minutes, or hours, or -- ?

RUNDEL: Well, if you can't find (UNCLEAR) (GARBLED) if you ask for -- for it, then you got to use a password generator, which is a program you write for your own computer that will just try out random passwords, until it finds one.

HARTMAN: How aware of you are -- of how illegal what you're talking about doing is, the fact that -- are you aware that it's illegal?

RUNDEL: Yes, I try not to do anything that will make it too bad, because if you do start erasing files and screwing up the system, they're going to change the password. They're going to know something's wrong, and you won't have the access, any more. You'd have to start all over.

HARTMAN: But how aware are you that what you're doing is illegal?

RUNDEL: Well...

HARTMAN: Against the law. I mean, this -- I mean, what you just said was, Well, if you -- you know, if you screw it up, then you can't get back in there, again. Which sounds maybe like fun for you, but it's illegal.

RUNDEL: (STARTS TO SPEAK)

HARTMAN: How concerned are you about that?

RUNDEL: Well, I guess it would be -- well, I feel it's the owner of the system's fault, you know, if you -- doesn't have the system well protected enough that it will stop somebody from getting in. But (OVERTALK)...

HARTMAN: But how different is that from somebody who has a manual accounting system in an office, and if the door happens to be unlocked, you could walk in and burn the manual files? Can you turn around and say that is the problem -- because somebody left the door unlocked? That doesn't make it any less a crime, does it, potentially?

RUNDEL: Well, that would be physically breaking and entry, and, well, (OVERTALK)...

HARTMAN: How is -- in the computer age, how is your cracking into a computer any different from that?

RUNDEL: I guess it wouldn't be much different.

HARTMAN: All right. How concerned are you about that?

RUNDEL: (STARTS TO SPEAK)

HARTMAN: That you could get in trouble?

RUNDEL: Yeah. (STARTS TO SPEAK)

HARTMAN: Concerned?

RUNDEL: Well, I -- it doesn't really bother me that much, because I've been doing it a long time.

HARTMAN: Arthur Miller, our legal expert, joins us now to help us understand this growing problem of computer crime.

Good morning, Arthur.

ARTHUR MILLER: Good morning.

HARTMAN: Just how illegal are these acts that are being committed by...

MILLER: Very illegal. It's theft. It's breaking and entering. It's malicious destruction of property.

The problem is twofold, David. First, in many states our criminal statutes are really written for stealing cars and horses, rather than for stealing information, so we've got, in a

sense, a horse-and-buggy theft statute with a Buck Rogers or Star Wars crime. They have to be rewritten to be very clear.

HARTMAN: Is that being done?

MILLER: It is being done, increasingly, and I expect a federal statute to be enacted within a year or two.

The second problem is, How are you going to get a conviction? This is a nice-looking, young kid. He's probably a first offender. Juries won't understand. Judges are lenient. And the prosecutors are from an older generation, so you have a generation gap between the prosecutor and the young computer theft. So, people just aren't sufficiently aware of the tremendous damage.

HARTMAN: How -- what does this say, in your judgment --listening to his responses, what does it say about the kind of trianing our young people are getting, either in school or at home -- given his responses to my questions about illegality, or possible harm to individuals (UNCLEAR)?

MILLER: There's a real socialization problem, here. This kid thought he was borrowing the computer. He was out on a joy ride. He didn't realize, really, it was a crime until you put those questions to them. Ethics and morality have to come through the education process and at home, not through the law.

HARTMAN: Arthur Miller, thank you.