

In 2012 a mysterious group appeared with a cryptographic challenge imbedded in an image on 4chan's /x/ board. Solvers were greeted with a series of puzzles, taking them further down the rabbit hole, until the challenge was concluded, and none of the solvers were heard from again regarding the matter. In 2013 the group posted a new challenge, and in much the same manner, the puzzle was solved and then the winners went silent

On January 4th, it begins again.

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[deleted] 7 years ago

Also, after reading this, the existence of this subreddit suddenly made sense. I have always wondered who made it or why it exists...

## r/A858DE45F56D9BC9

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Skwink 7 years ago

My personal theory on that subreddit and the other couple like it is that they actually are using reddit to send encoded messages with a real meaning.

Reddit's a free and easy way to communicate, and these subs are often just brushed off as a coder's experiment with a bot, or some just fake messages that are meant to get people to











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madgreed 7 years ago

Although maybe a stretch, it wouldn't surprise me if some of those (particularly the twitter ones) really are just modern day <u>numbers stations</u>

If you were an international spy or whatever being able to receive messages on popular sites like reddit/twitter etc would be a good way to get communications without putting up huge red flags in the event you're possibly being monitored or whatever.





[deleted] 7 years ago

One of the reasons numbers stations are likely to persist for some time is that there is no record of who listens to or copies a radio transmission.

With the internet, for an operative within a hostile nation, once the appropriate URLs are discovered it becomes very easy to have one's identity revealed (though perhaps some groups act contrary to this common sense).

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echo\_xtra 7 years ago

Indeed. This is the whole reason steganography exists. If you're looking for an obvious numbers station, then you've been successfully distracted. You really should be looking for embedded messages in <u>r/pics</u>

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Notenough1997 7 years ago

Cosidering that many countries still have number stations, this is quite possible.

8 🖶 Share ···



[deleted] 7 years ago

Right. And it may be part of an ongoing arg or cryptography experiment such as this.

5 ♣ Share ···



Shacod 7 years ago

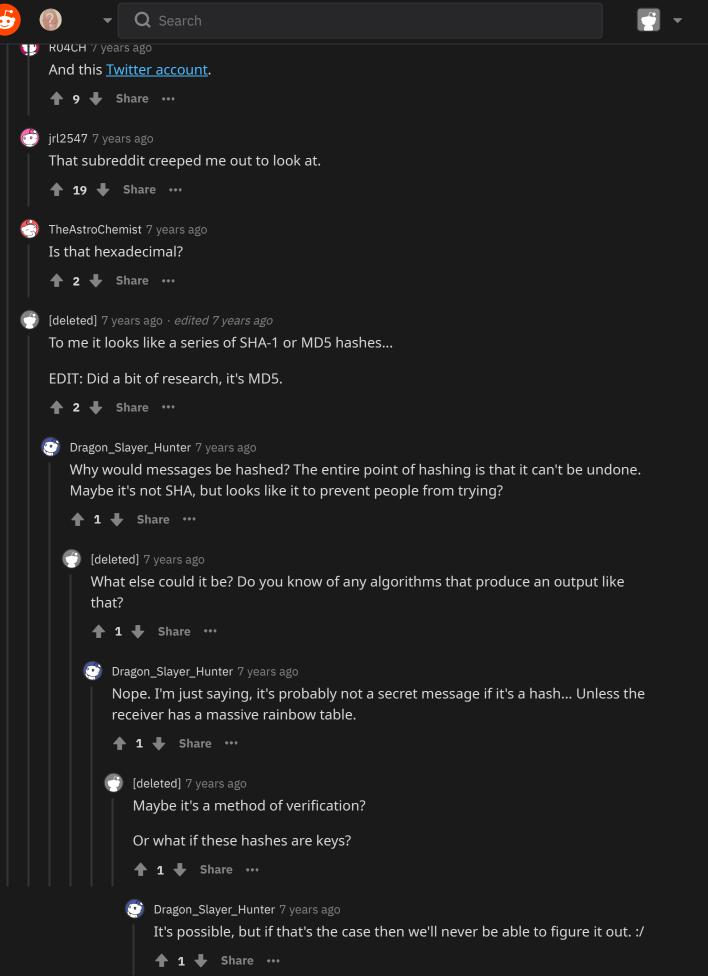
It's an interesting coincidence that the user posting things in the subreddit you mentioned and the original subreddt (r/a2e7j6ic78h0j/) both have 7 link karma and 0 comment karma, and were created within the same month a year apart.

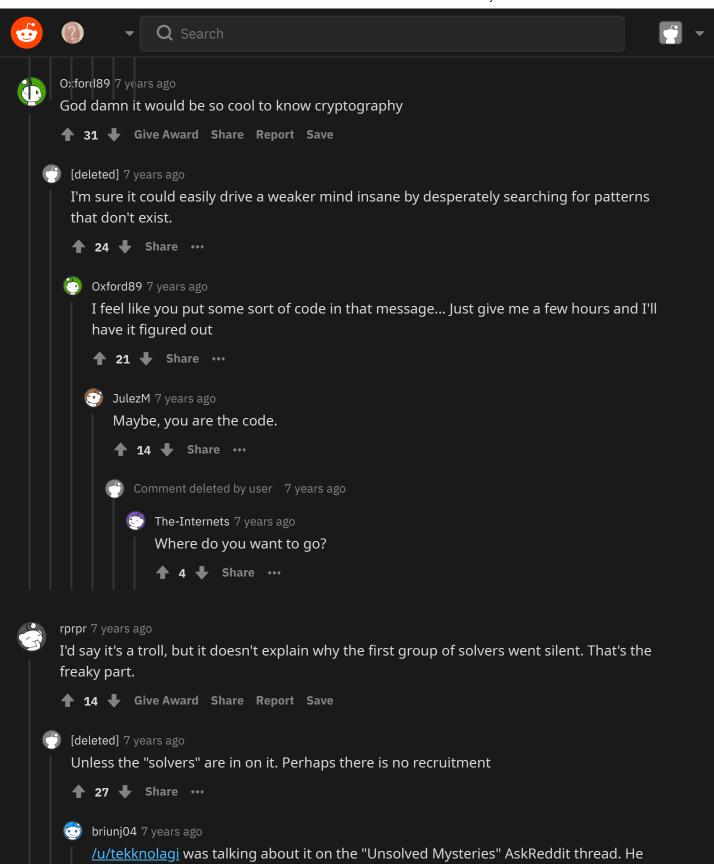
**12 ♦** Share •••



JahLife68 7 years ago

It must be some sort of game, the symbols on the page are Mayan numerals.





says that he was one of the solvers and he did end up getting recruited.

Either that, or the solvers were recruited to join in the game for the future.

**♣** Share •••

enderandrew42 6 years ago

/https://www.reddit.com/r/UnresolvedMysteries/comments/1rgc2c/who\_or\_what\_is\_cicada3301 4/18







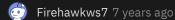


Panfish 7 years ago

What does it mean they went silent?

It is just that they stopped posting on the Cicada boards or did they also stop posting on their Tri-County Paintball and Big Bang Theory slashfic boards? Do people who know them IRL report that they just vanished leaving their breakfst untouched on the kitchen table? Was any trace of them deleted from history including their online class project from last year and their finishing time from the 5k fun run?

♠ 8 ♣ Share ···



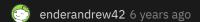
They probably went silent on the subject because they were "recruited" to help with the next set of puzzles. Which would easily explain the year long gap.

4 🖶 Share ···

rprpr 7 years ago

Yeah. That makes some sense. I would be okay with that.

♠ 3 ♣ Share ···



- 1. We have publicly released information from people who were selected for individual challenges, even though that information was to be kept private or confidential.
- 2. We're told the solvers who got those individual challenges were silent and effectively disappeared.
- 3. The above two statements seem to contradict, leading me to believe that the solvers did leak their challenges after solving, but are pretending to be silent to join in on the game and create a false air of mystery.

O ♣ Share ···



elverloho 7 years ago

I read through the wiki and I noticed one thing: to the best of my knowledge, nobody has tried to actually identify the people responsible. You keep following the clues, but you keep forgetting that it's not so easy to hide your tracks online. A lot of questions have not even been asked.

- Who registered the domain names?
- Has anyone tried to find out whom the telephone number belonged to?
- At one point the VPS's public IP was exposed, but it wasn't revealed in the wiki and no attempt seems to have been made to find out who's behind it.
- Which addresses were the emails sent from?
- Has anybody tried to look at the headers of the emails?

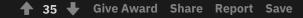












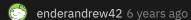


[deleted] 7 years ago · edited 7 years ago

That's what I'm most curious about! I think this information IS out there, and I find it incredible that everyone is working so hard to solve these puzzles, but no one has thought to attempt to identify the people creating them. The fact that they were able to create a series of telephone numbers ending in 3301 and 1033 indicates indicates that some kind of trail must exist. This lends further creedence to the troll theory IMO.

Of course, someone capable of creating these kinds of elaborate puzzles is also clever enough to hide their real email addresses, IPs, etc....but there has to be a physical trail somewhere....someone who has interacted with a member of cicada3301 without knowing it, or maybe a money trail...although if I had to bet then I'd guess they pay for everything in bitcoins and use social engineering to keep people from catching on to why they are setting up these websites and phone numbers.

🛧 11 🖶 Share 🚥



You can keep registering for Google voice with random accounts until you get a phone number ending with the digits you want.

3 🖶 Share 🚥

Dragon\_Slayer\_Hunter 7 years ago

It's really not that impossible to hide from civilians.

Registrar information can be faked...easily, considering nobody actually verifies it. If you host your website on a shared vps, the IP is only going to tell you who owns the vps (the company, not the user). Email headers at most will tell you the originating IP, but can also be faked or not useful if sent through a website that will spoof emails for you.

If you were a cop investigating a crime, these things would be mere inconveniences, but that's not the case.

**↑** 4 **↓** Share •••

SmokeEater62 7 years ago

Say this was a crime. A regular street decetive wouldn't put much stock in the internet aspect. But I'd be intrigued by that phone number. Was it a land line? Those require addreses and bills. I'ds are required an so on. The locations around the globe. Why those spots. Ofcourse so much is needed to ask why those locations but still

2 - Share ···

acnt2013 7 years ago











the U.S.) and Fongo (might only be available in Canada) both give you a free phone number.

2 🖶 Share ···

SmokeEater62 7 years ago

True. Didn't think about that

🛧 1 🖶 Share 🚥

enderandrew42 6 years ago

The first anonymous email service I saw in the late 90s had email repeated through multiple servers, each that were only online for certain hours, and each were designed to mask the originating IP. If you tried to trace backwards to find the origin of the email, it was a pain.

**↑** 1 **↓** Share •••



beebop51 7 years ago

Kifflom!

**↑ 10**  Give Award Share Report Save

PREDATORA 7 years ago

Amen brother, brother!

↑ 3 ♣ Share ···



[deleted] 7 years ago

This is too cool.

🕇 10 🖶 Share Report Save



[deleted] 7 years ago

This is 4chan.

Cicada appeared on their boards with a test? Mkay.

Posters showed photos of flyers and posted them only on 4chan? Mkay.

Content feels like a mixture of Google tests, with classic ARG (alternate reality game) allusions (eg I love bees), and a dash of hacker movie code your own GUI BS? Mkay.

Exclusive elite hacker club gets reported in the news to further promote the 1337 nature of 4chan? Mkay.







ultimate troll on the reactionary media this group abhors. And because of the nature of secretive groups, it cannot be easily proven false. If someone does, the hivemind will arise to show how this is incorrect.

This is the perfect troll heist.

**↑** 93 **↓** Share Report Save



[deleted] 7 years ago

I honestly think that 4chan is to far-gone and just that someone would have to have SO MUCH time on their hands, and SO MUCH dedication to do this simply for the lulz. Having people dedicate hundreds of hours all for what? the worlds most elaborate rick roll?

I'm just saying, this isn't exactly a habbo hotel or low orbit ion cannon type thing. IMO it's far to in depth and elaborate to just be the craziest troll to have ever existed. I think the odds might actually be better of it being some kind of cyber-security recruitment than the worlds most elaborate troll.

**↑** 37 **↓** Share •••



[deleted] 7 years ago

I'd agree excluding one factor: everything here could be created by individuals one step at a time.

Post by post they built the myth, each adding another piece of the metanarrative. This collaborative fiction would take 5 minutes per user but feel much bigger.

**↑** 21 **↓** Share •••



[deleted] 7 years ago

Exactly this, it's way easier especially if we don't know how many people are involved or what kind of assistance they have in creating the puzzles.

**↑** 10 **↓** Share •••



[deleted] 7 years ago · edited 7 years ago

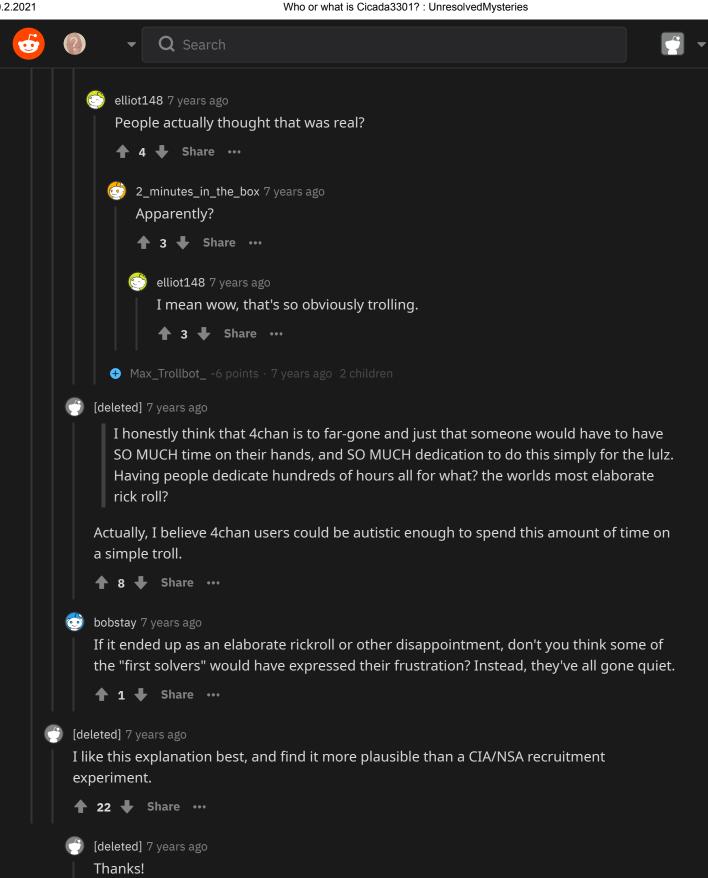
After reading into the way some of the puzzles are constructed, I don't think it's a few individuals doing it haphazardly. They all seem to be too interconnected in theme and in many of the solutions numerically, which would indicate that whatever group is doing this is very organized. Very unlike anon.

I still think this scenario is more likely than a government agency recruitment tool, particularly if solvers from each round are vetted to help construct the next, but if this IS the work of anon, then cicada 3301 is a very dedicated group of trolls.

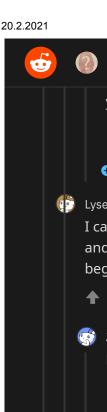
🛧 5 🖶 Share 🚥



2\_minutes\_in\_the\_box 7 years ago



With what we've learned in the past year, do we really think the CIA is using flyers to advertise their hacker club? Anyone would be forced to sign an NDA if this was a valid legal or government entity.



you a hacker Demi-god.

🛖 8 🖶 Share 🚥

+ foreskinforce5 -9 points · 7 years ago 2 children

LysergicAcidDiethyla 7 years ago

I can attest to this. I posted this image on /b/ a few years back which got some attention and I even put up 2 posters in 2 major cities in the UK. If it wasn't people trolling right at the beginning it certainly is now.

**↑** 11 **↓** Share •••

Jigsus 7 years ago

Proof? What compelled you?

**↑** 2 **↓** Share •••

LysergicAcidDiethyla 7 years ago

I don't really have proof that I posted a 4chan thread in like 2010 and the posters are long gone now.

What compelled me? I saw one of the earliest Cicada3301 threads on /x/ and posted it on /b/ to get their minds racing about all kinds of conspiracy theories and such. I just did if for fun, no motive.

**↑** 5 **↓** Share •••

[deleted] 7 years ago

We solved a mystery in <a href="mailto:r/UnsolvedMysteries">r/UnsolvedMysteries</a>!:)

**↑** 8 **↓** Share •••

TheRedGerund 7 years ago

No way this feels nothing like 4chan. Their big movements focus on a large army, not like this, so singular and quiet. That too; 4chan is not known for subtlety.

♠ 3 ♣ Share ···

[deleted] 7 years ago

4chan ≠ anon.

4chan is made of individuals. Many of them joke or share ideas. This is so simple it could have been created by one or two people to troll everyone.

And subdued? This has been reported on every major news outlet. How is posting to a public forum subdued?

**↑** 1 **↓** Share •••





mental gymnastics you went through to arrive at the conclusion that that distinction is in your favor.

As for the news outlets, please link those articles. I haven't been able to find them.

The point is that anything organized by 4chan is designed to be loud and not misunderstood. Provide one example where a clever series of clues to this degree have proven to be a 4chan troll.

🛧 3 🖶 Share 🚥



[deleted] 7 years ago

I believe it was 4chan. When referencing large action, that is anon.

Here are a half dozen articles about Cicada just in 2014. All are on the first page of Google: http://www.theregister.co.uk/2014/01/11/cicada 3301 2014/ http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/internet/10555088/Cicada-3301-updatethe-baffling-internet-mystery-is-back.html http://www.wnyc.org/story/meetteenage-codebreaker-who-helped-solve-cicada-3301-internet-puzzle/ http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/jan/10/cicada-3301-i-tried-thehardest-puzzle-on-the-internet-and-failed-spectacularly http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2014-01-22/cicada-3301-internet-puzzleresume-line http://motherboard.vice.com/blog/the-mysterious-cicada-3301internet-challenge-is-back-for-another-year-

Cicada is loud and misunderstood. These aren't drastically different from any ARG or technology that 4chan has assaulted. In this case though they created the unhackable system, because they hold the keys to an empty safe.

🛧 1 🖶 Share 🚥



TheRedGerund 7 years ago

"This has been reported on every major news outlet."

I didn't see it on CNN, FOX, or WSJ. None of these sources are considered major news outlets in the US. I suppose the register and telegraph are at least slightly known.

"All are on the first page of Google"

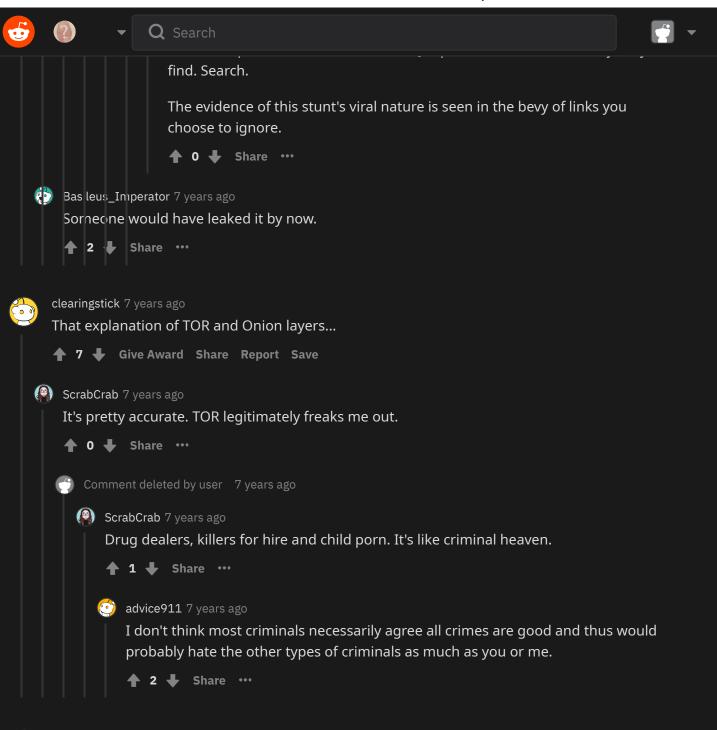
I'm just saying that trolling depends on the content being viral. This isn't viral, so it's a very specific and very bad troll.

🛖 -1 🖶 Share 🚥



[deleted] 7 years ago

Ha, ha - you can ignore all of the sources I showed you, but that just proves you're unable to accept any evidence.





ArchMichael7 7 years ago

Even if this isn't some sort of "larger mystery" - it's fun and intriguing. If it just ends up being a group of bored, smart people that wanted to do something interesting, I'm still fantastically happy about it.

Good for whoever they are. Unless they are killing people for their pineal gland secretions... Then that's bad.: P

**↑** 7 **↓** Give Award Share Report Save



brood\_x 7 years ago

I like cicadas.









## http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Periodical\_cicadas

7 🖶 Give Award Share Report Save

Metalgrowler 7 years ago

What are you up to

♠ 9 ♣ Share ···

jvene1 7 years ago

only once every 17 years? I do it like twice a day.

♠ 3 ♣ Share ···



District\_10 7 years ago · edited 7 years ago

I just finished reading the Wiki and I am thoroughly frightened. This is all incredibly fascinating. The fact that they've posted flyers around the globe in a coordinated fashion is just spooky.

If this isn't an NSA/CIA/MI6 recruitment drive...I don't know what else this could be. And that utterly terrifies me.

I guess we can only wait until January 4th, browse /x/, and see what happens next...

Wiki: http://uncovering-cicada.wikia.com/wiki/What Happened Part 1 (2012)

**↑** 39 **↓** Give Award Share Report Save

LysergicAcidDiethyla 7 years ago

Don't be frightened. It's bullshit.

**↑** 30 **↓** Share •••

[deleted] 7 years ago

Bullshit can be frightening...sometimes.

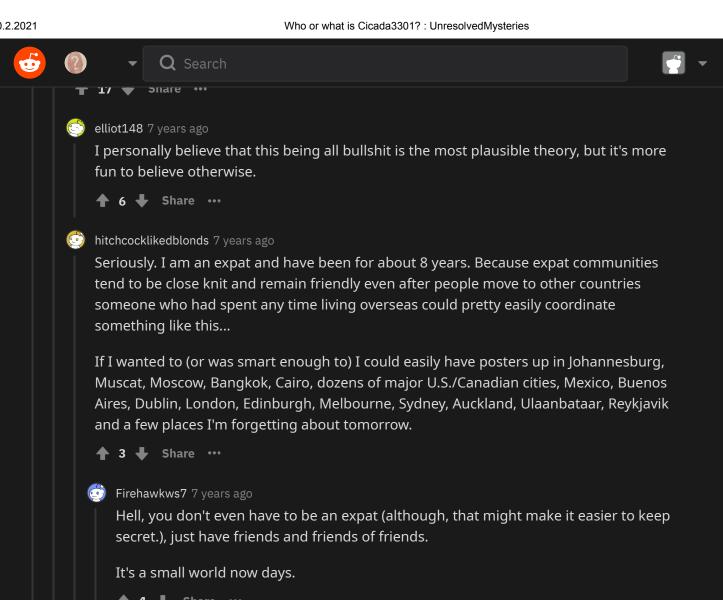
**↑ 11 →** Share •••

Troubled\_Tribble 7 years ago

As someone with multiple family members in different areas of intelligence, let me tell you that 4chan is quite literally the opposite of what agencies view as a recruiting pool.

Firehawkws7 7 years ago

It's not hard to get someone you know somewhere else in the world to put a piece of paper on a telephone pole at a specific place at a specific time.



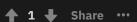


hitchcocklikedblonds 7 years ago That is definitely true. I was simply applying it to my own life and why I know people all over the world:)



Firehawkws7 7 years ago

I got what you were saying, I was just dumbing it down for the nutters.



hitchcocklikedblonds 7 years ago

Lol. I understand and appreciate.



enderandrew42 6 years ago

fiverr.com - you can have someone in another city do something for \$5.

The fact that they got fliers posted in a handful of cities isn't difficult in the internet age.













Unkn0wnn 7 years ago

What if its a cicada awareness team?

This whole thing sounds Alex riderish

**↑** 3 **↓** Give Award Share Report Save



[deleted] 7 years ago

http://news-hound.net/january-4th-2014-planetary-alignment-decreases-gravity-float-for-5minutes/

I read this today, and thought of this thread which I read last night. Two strange things occurring on the same day? :P

**↑** 2 **↓** Share Report Save



WhatTheFruit 7 years ago

Where can I find the 2014 one?

**↑** 2 **↓** Give Award Share Report Save



slobambusar 7 years ago

cicada wikia, you have IRC and also hundreds of articles <a href="http://uncovering-nt/meta-12">http://uncovering-nt/meta-12</a> cicada.wikia.com/wiki/Uncovering Cicada Wiki

**↑** 3 **↓** Share •••



enderandrew42 6 years ago

Look at specifically what they are testing for. The part where you look for hidden clues is about on par with many ARGs. It isn't so impossible as to drive everyone away, and is just difficult enough to get public attention.

The really tough challenges are in the individual ones where you have to code functional servers in time limits and such. But overall they're looking for people who know how to keep their identity private, who are familiar with the Dark Web, people who understand the basics of encryption, people who know Linux, people who know networking and information security.

The ability to get a flyer posted in a few towns isn't impressive and doesn't really require massive funds or manpower. But why are they looking for people with the above criteria. I have three theories.

1. This is a game and the ultimate purpose is fun. The winners each year and now in on the game and help prepare future years.







botnet to perform attacks. But the nacktivist groups (if you want to call them that, because Anonymous has done some selfish, non-activist things such as exposing credit card details of innocent consumers) do need actual coders.

3. This is a recruitment tool for profit seeking black hat hackers. Never underestimate greed as a motivator. However, this seems unlikely to me, because someone is reaching the finish line of the individual challenges. If they're let in on a joke, it is likely they'll want to participate. If it is recruitment for a hacktivist cause, I can see them keeping the secret. But if this is recruitment for a more nefarious group, it is possible someone reaching the end has a conscience and would expose them.

2 🖶 Give Award Share Report Save



GoLightLady 7 years ago

Wow. I found that story, beautiful. It's romantic, the unknown, the way it continues with no real answer, but only quesses by those who don't know. The sense of exhilaration when something new is discovered, but then let down again right there after. Makes me wish I had mad crypto/interweb skills.

🛊 2 🖶 Give Award Share Report Save



outonthetown 7 years ago

As always, please post a summary in the actual post, per the rules in the sidebar

2 Give Award Share Report Save



alegitpenguin 7 years ago

I am intrigued by this.

1 Give Award Share Report Save



[deleted] 7 years ago

'Tis nothing but the Second Annual NSA Recruitment Contest, folks. They are obviously looking for a Snowden replacement.

**↑ 1 →** Share Report Save



enderandrew42 6 years ago

Recruiting from Reddit and 4chan is not the way you find someone who loves the NSA and wouldn't spill NSA secrets.

🛧 1 🖶 Share 🚥



[deleted] 7 years ago

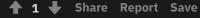














mankind99 6 years ago

Here is a story about it

http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/10468112/The-internetmystery-that-has-the-world-baffled.html

**↑ 1 →** Give Award Share Report Save



[deleted] 7 years ago

Just like Orwelles' War of the Worlds Broadcast, this screams 4chan. Trolling.

**↑ 1 →** Share Report Save



enderandrew42 6 years ago

But where are the lulz?

This seems far more like a traditional MIT prank than 4chan's usual work.

2 - Share ···



[deleted] 6 years ago

The lulz are just like the WotW broadcast, being shared by the concocters who realize people actually bought into the hype.

MIT pranks don't span continents, they stay in the vicinity of the school. 4Chan loves trolling on an international scale.

**1** ♣ Share •••



[deleted] 7 years ago

Whether this is some sort of collaborative narrative/ARG, shady government recruitment drive, secret society initiation, or whatever... I think this is exciting and absolutely fascinating. More like this!

**↑ 1 →** Share Report Save



M\_H\_T\_H 7 years ago

Check out the novel "Daemon" by Daniel Suarez. Eccentric billionaire recruits best & brightest to overthrow the world. And this story eerily mirrors how "Daemon" begins...

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Tokenofhon 7 years ago

