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Local researchers help fix iOS security flaws



A customer configures the fingerprint scanner technology built into iPhone 5s at an Apple store in Wangfujing shopping district in Beijing on Sept 20, 2013. Photo: AP

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SINGAPORE — Researchers from the Infocomm Security Department at A*STAR's Institute for Infocomm Research (I2R) and Singapore Management University's (SMU) School of Information Systems were the first to discover several security weaknesses in Apple's iOS.

The vulnerabilities found by the researchers, which includes pass-code cracking, interference with or control of regular phone use and sending tweets without the user's awareness and permission, were rectified by Apple in iOS 7, they said in a press release today.

Last year, I2R and SMU researchers identified the circumstances that enabled third-party applications to launch attacks on iOS devices, designed multiple proof-of-concepts of the attacks, such as cracking the device PIN, blocking incoming calls and posting unauthorised tweets, and proposed several solutions to facilitate the investigation process.

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Dr Tan Geok Leng, Executive Director of the Institute for Infocomm Research said, “I2R’s expertise in the infocomm security arena has once again been harnessed to benefit the mobile community. We are proud of our researchers’ efforts in boosting the security of Apple’s latest operating system — the iOS 7. The enhanced data protection, secured telephony functionality and protected Twitter functionality will let iOS end users utilise their mobile devices for leisure or work with a peace of mind.”

SMU’s Vice Provost of Research and Dean of the School of Information Systems Professor Steven Miller, said, “Information security is a core area of research at the SMU School of Information Systems. Our research team not only aims to create impact in the research community, but also in the wider

in cyberspace, and in this case help strengthen the security of the iOS platform to protect the security and privacy of businesses and individuals.”

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