Fatal System Error: The Hunt for the New Crime Lords Who are Bringing Down the Internet

By Joseph Menn

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In this disquieting cyber thriller, Joseph Menn takes readers into the murky hacker underground, traveling the globe from San Francisco to Costa Rica and London to Russia. His guides are California surfer and computer whiz Barrett Lyon and a fearless British high-tech agent. Through these heroes, Menn shows the evolution of cyber-crime from small-time thieving to sophisticated, organized gangs, who began by attacking corporate websites but increasingly steal financial data from consumers and defense secrets from governments. Using unprecedented access to Mob businesses and Russian officials, the book reveals how top criminals earned protection from the Russian government.

Fatal System Error penetrates both the Russian cyber-mob and La Cosa Nostra as the two fight over the Internet's massive spoils. The cloak-and-dagger adventure shows why cyber-crime is much worse than you thought—and why the Internet might not survive.

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Editorial Review

Review

Richard A. Clarke, Counter-terror chief under presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush and author of *Against All Enemies: Inside America 's War on Terror*
"*Fatal System Error* accurately reveals the secretive global cyber cartels and their hidden multi-billion dollar business, proving cybercrime does pay and pays well."

Jonathan Zittrain, Professor of Law, Harvard Law School; Co-Founder, Berkman Center for Internet & Society and author of *The Future of the Internet—And How to Stop It*
"Joseph Menn immerses us in the personalities and politics behind today's cybersecurity threats and countermeasures. This balanced, compelling account shows why the future of the Internet depends more on people of good will than on some technological magic bullet."

Vicky Raab, *The New Yorker*
"[*Fatal System Error*] kept me riveted to the couch all weekend"

Quentin Hardy, *Forbes*
"[A] well-reported book on some of the biggest (known) cybercrimes in the past decade… Menn's book could hardly be more timely."

Network World
"As eye-popping as the book's portrayal of bookies and wise-guy swagger is… the second half of the book is even more mind-blowing."

"*Fatal System Error* is an enjoyable read on par [with] books such as *The Cuckoo's Egg: Tracking a Spy Through the Maze of Computer Espionage* and *Takedown: The Pursuit and Capture of Kevin Mitnick*."

Processor
"Menn's deconstruction of an especially sophisticated set of attacks, the victim's countermeasures, and eventual criminal investigation of the web of attackers is a valuable wake-up call for IT pros that should serve to catalyze redoubled efforts to improve cybersecurity."

Slashdot
Fatal System Error: The Hunt for the New Crime Lords Who are Bringing Down the Internet is the wake-up call that those in Washington, and those charged with IT need to wake up to. Unfortunately, it is likely those that truly need to read this book, will press the information security snooze button yet again.

Los Angeles Times, April 27, 2010
"[E]ven an unbiased observer would say that Fatal System Error is a compelling read, despite the fact that it's nonfiction (or maybe because it's nonfiction). It's also a very frightening book."

Richard Stiennon, founder of *T-Harvest* and former VP of Threat Research at *Webroot Software*
"Not since Cliff Stoll's *The Cuckoo's Egg: Tracking a Spy Through the Maze of Computer Espionage* has there been a book that delves as deeply into the workings of criminal hackers. This book will be widely read by law enforcement, policy makers, and IT security professionals. Like Stoll's book I predict it will inspire a generation of technologists to join the battle against cyber criminals."

Register
"An informative and entertaining look at the roots of the burgeoning cybercrime economy and its links to government, featuring a rogue's gallery of international wrong 'uns…. It's one of the best descriptions of the formation of the underground economy I've read. It deserves to be read by those in the IT security industry, policy formation and with any interest in a hype-free expose of the true face of cybercrime."

The Guardian
"Menn's book is riveting, as much for the terrifying detail it includes – both about gambling sites and the extent of botnet infection and the feckless lack of high-level international cooperation – especially by George Bush's administration – that allowed their architects to enrich themselves."

Slashdot

BBC Focus Magazine
"The issues raised are hugely important, and failure to deal with criminals behind so much online crime will be an embarrassment to governments worldwide."

Business Week
"In profiling two eclectic cyber-crime fighters, Menn has crafted a fascinating high-tech whodunit that educates even as it entertains."

The Guardian
"Menn spins racy tales of true-life cybercrime...The villains glory in handles such as 'Bra1n', and the heroes are portrayed respectively as Matthew Broderick from Wargames and Daniel Craig's Bond, but the narrative glitter is sprinkled on top of serious and thorough reporting. Menn concludes: 'A number of enormously powerful national governments, especially those of Russia and China, have picked the blossoming of the internet age as the time to ally with organised crime.'"

About the Author

Joseph Menn covers cyber-security and other technology issues for the *Financial Times*, after a decade on the same beat for the *Los Angeles Times*. He is the author of 2003's *All the Rave: The Rise and Fall of Shawn Fanning's Napster* and a two-time finalist for the Gerald Loeb Award, the top prize in business reporting.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Thomas Schulz:

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Tom Copper:

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Michael Nunn:

Playing with family in the park, coming to see the water world or hanging out with pals is thing that usually you might have done when you have spare time, subsequently why you don't try point that really opposite from that. One activity that make you not experience tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you have been ride on and with addition of information. Even you love Fatal System Error: The Hunt for the New Crime Lords Who are Bringing Down the Internet, you can enjoy both. It is excellent combination right, you still need to miss it? What kind of hang-out type is it? Oh can occur its mind hangout men. What? Still don't understand it, oh come on its identified as reading friends.

Cathie Moss:

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