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# Web Owners Urged to Upgrade From Insecure SHA-1 Algorithm

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Security experts are urging website owners to ensure their SSL certificates are signed with the SHA-2 algorithm, after discovering a new way to crack the old SHA-1 version.

Advances in computing technology have made it increasingly cost effective for attackers to target hashing algorithm SHA-1, which is used to sign around a third of the SSL certs used to secure websites.

That's why web browsers will no longer accept these certificates after 1 January 2017.

However, a new team of researchers has estimated it would cost between $75,000 and $120,000 to rent public cloud services to launch such an attack – still expensive but within the reach of major cybercrime gangs.

There are also mutterings within the Certificate Authority industry that the January 2017 deadline might be extended.

Now researchers from Singapore's Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Centrum Wiskunde and Informatica in the Netherlands and France's NTU and Inria have described a way to simplify an "identical-prefix" attack on SHA-1.

It would not allow attackers to generate fake SSL certificates, but the research should be seen as yet another sign that the legacy hashing algorithm has had its day, according to IDG.

Kevin Bocek, vice president of security strategy & threat intelligence at Venafi, argued that the widespread use of a flawed algorithm is sending a clear message to cybercriminals: "feel free to mount more web attacks on us because we're too lazy to upgrade to SHA-2."

He claimed Venafi found over 1.5 million certificates using SHA-1 which were issued after NIST had deprecated its usage.

"If we don't start taking the security of digital certificates and cryptographic keys seriously, we'll continue living in a world without trust – a world without an immune system – and a world where a cryptoapocalypse will inevitably happen," he argued.

"We urge the industry to consider shifting this deadline up and enterprises should not wait any longer to migrate to SHA-2."

IT security teams should locate SHA-1 certificates immediately, automate the transition process and report on their progress before the 2017 deadline, Bocek added.

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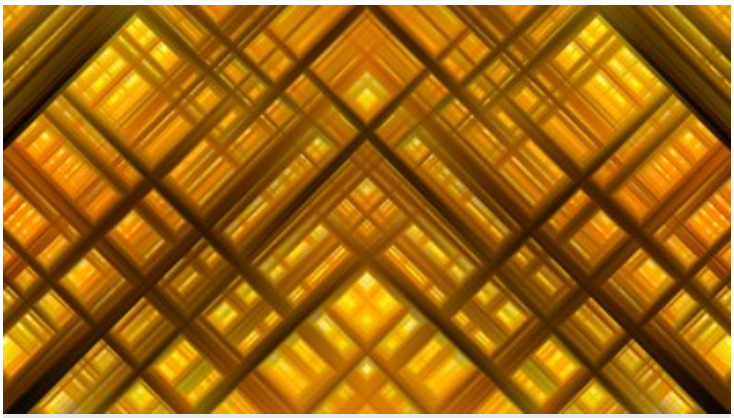

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