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1. On 20 July 1989 a four person panel testified before the House Subcommittee on Telecommunications and Finance in a hearing to examine the vulnerability of national telecommunications networks to computer viruses. The subcommittee was chaired by Rep. Edward Markey (D-MA), and the witness list consisted of representation from the General Accounting Office (GAO), The Computer Software and Services Industry Association (ADAPSO), EDUCOM, and the John von Neuman Supercomputer Center. The witness list is attached.

Date:

26 July 1989

- 2. This hearing (1) described the Internet virus incident (2) examined issues relating to Internet security and vulnerabilities, and (3) discussed factors affecting the prosecution of computer virus crimes. It was patterned after a report by the General Accounting Office on the same subject, dated June 1989, but not released to the general public until the time of this hearing. The purpose of the hearing was to form the basis for draft HR55 entitled "The Computer Virus Eradication Act."
- 3. There was little conflict among the panel members during the hearing. They all agreed that the Internet incident demonstrated that serious vulnerabilities exist in public networks and there is no sure-fire technical protection mechanism for stopping similar problems from occurring in the future.
- 4. Security vs. usability issues relating to networks were discussed. The panel members concurred that increasing the development and use of security controls like encryption, user authentication, and auditing procedures was a good idea and needed desperately to be done better on many networks including Internet, but would not be the whole solution to the problem. They also believed that limiting access to only trusted users would significantly help the problem; however, it was clearly not appropriate for all situations. Internet is one of these situation where decreasing access is not the solution.



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