

BREAKING NEWS

For Immediate Release



AUB research team uncovers a smartphone app that could steal users' money

Beirut, Lebanon- 08/05/2012 - The Network Security Group at the American University of Beirut (AUB) has developed a smartphone application that is capable of transferring prepaid phone credits without the phone user's authorization or knowledge. The application masquerades itself as a benign messaging application that, once installed, starts sending and intercepting SMS messages, causing unauthorized credit transfers to another phone number without being detected.

"The potential impact of the app is in the loss of millions of dollars from the accounts of phone subscribers," said Imad Elhajj, professor of electrical and computer engineering at AUB. "The vulnerability exists on most smartphone operating systems, and affects many operators in the region, including the two operators in Lebanon who were informed about this vulnerability."

A prototype application was demonstrated on a Samsung smartphone running the Android 2.3 operating system over both mobile network operators in Lebanon. The malware was not detected by any virus detection tools, and could be published on Google's Play Store. In addition to Elhajj, the research team includes electrical and computer engineering professors Ayman Kayssi and Ali Chehab, and graduate student Khodor Hamandi. This vulnerability was discovered by the group as part of a research project funded by TELUS Corporation, Canada.

ENDS

For more information please contact:

Maha Al-Azar, Associate Director for Media Relations, ma110@aub.edu.lb, 01-353 228

Note to Editors

About AUB

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 600 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,000 students. AUB currently offers more than 100 programs leading to the bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full service 420-bed hospital.

Stay up to date on AUB news and events. Follow us on:

Website: www.aub.edu.lb

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/aub.edu.lb>

Twitter: http://twitter.com/AUB_Lebanon