

Cybergangs infiltrate social network sites

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- Cybergangs are hiring employees to decipher the distorted letters, or "captchas," used by social networking Web sites to guard against spam, experts say.

Researchers say there are probably dozens of captcha-breaking gangs employing hundreds of people worldwide. The workers are recruited via Web-based ads and toil piecemeal in Internet cafes or in sweatshops filled with PCs in China, India, Russia, Brazil, Argentina and Nigeria, USA Today reported Thursday.

Popular social sites such as Facebook and MySpace, once immune from mass e-mail spammers because users had to decipher and type in a series of distorted letters to access the system, have been infected by gangs hiring people to decipher thousands of captchas per day, paying a penny per captcha, USA Today said.

Experts say this has allowed gangs to create tens of thousands of fake e-mail and social network accounts, then employing them as starting points for a series of cyberscams spread by e-mail and instant messages, such as the "koobface" virus.

"We shouldn't have any illusions about captchas," Sergei Shevchenko, a virus hunter at Internet security firm PC Tools, told the newspaper. "If the professionals want to break in, they'll do it."

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