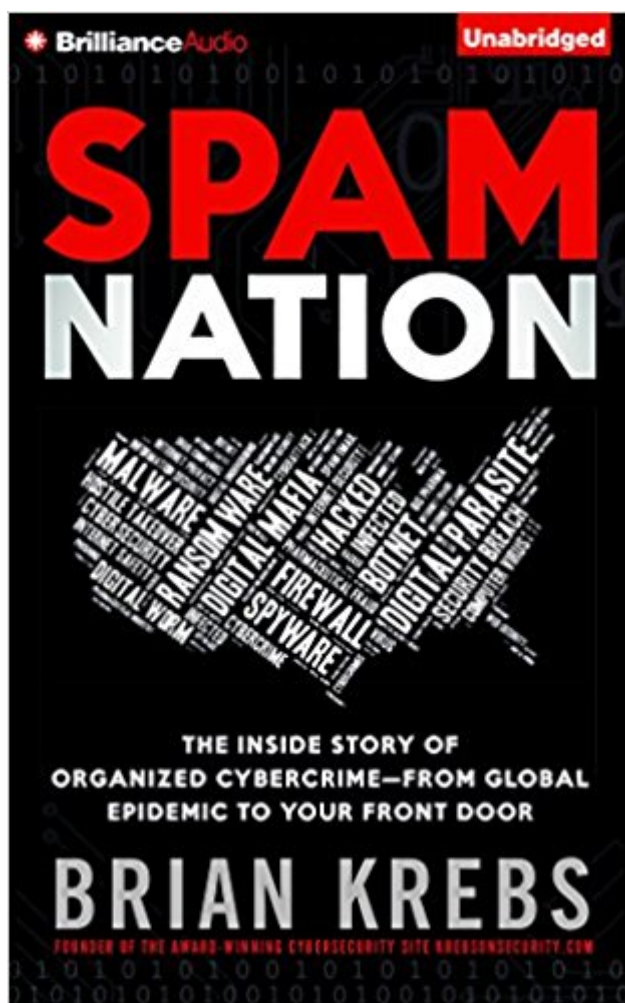


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# Spam Nation: The Inside Story Of Organized Cybercrime—From Global Epidemic To Your Front Door



## Synopsis

There is a Threat Lurking Online with the Power to Destroy Your Finances, Steal Your Personal Data, and Endanger Your Life. In *Spam Nation*, investigative journalist and cybersecurity expert Brian Krebs unmasks the criminal masterminds driving some of the biggest spam and hacker operations targeting Americans and their bank accounts. Tracing the rise, fall, and alarming resurrection of the digital mafia behind the two largest spam pharmacies and countless viruses, phishing, and spyware attacks, he delivers the first definitive narrative of the global spam problem and its threat to consumers everywhere. Blending cutting-edge research, investigative reporting, and firsthand interviews, this terrifying true story reveals how we unwittingly invite these digital thieves into our lives every day. From unassuming computer programmers right next door to digital mobsters like "Cosma" who unleashed a massive malware attack that has stolen thousands of Americans' logins and passwords, Krebs uncovers the shocking lengths to which these people will go to profit from our data and our wallets. Not only are hundreds of thousands of Americans exposing themselves to fraud and dangerously toxic products from rogue online pharmacies, but even those who never open junk messages are at risk. As Krebs notes, spammers can and do hack into accounts through these emails, harvest personal information like usernames and passwords, and sell them on the digital black market. The fallout from this global epidemic doesn't just cost consumers and companies billions, it costs lives too. Fast-paced and utterly gripping, *Spam Nation* ultimately proposes concrete solutions for protecting ourselves online and stemming this tidal wave of cybercrime before it's too late. "Krebs's talent for exposing the weaknesses in online security has earned him respect in the IT business and loathing among cybercriminals. His track record of scoops has helped him become the rare blogger who supports himself on the strength of his reputation for hard-nosed reporting." *Bloomberg Businessweek*

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Spam Nation is an excellent look at the technicalities, ethics, economics, global politics, and business of spam and cybercrime, and it is researched and told with enormous care and verve." - Cory Doctorow, Boing Boing "A fascinating and somewhat disheartening look why spam is so common...readers of Spam Nation will never look at the spam in their inbox the same way again." - USA Today "In Spam Nation, journalist Brian Krebs guides readers through the intimidating and technical world of organized cybercrime...Future wars will be waged in part by talented hackers with bot armies at their backs. For now, we have Krebs as a guide, and-thankfully-email filters." - The Washington Free Beacon "The book is a strong chronicle of how and why this junk business succeeds..." - Federal Computer Week "Krebs' guided tour of the cybercriminal underworld is a cautionary tale about menacing cultures of hackers, spammers and duplicitous digital network 'cybercrooks...' an eye-opening, immensely distressing exposé on the current state of organized cyberspammers." - Kirkus "Armed with reams of information sent to him by feuding hackers and cybercrooks, Krebs explores just how and why these spammers get away with so much...By exposing our digital weaknesses and following the money, he presents a fascinating and entertaining cautionary tale. Krebs's work is timely, informative, and sadly relevant in our cyber-dependent age." - Publishers Weekly "Spam Nation does a great job of telling an important aspect of the story, and what small things you can do to make a large difference, such that you won't fall victim to these scammers. At just under 250 pages, Spam Nation is a quick read and an important one at that." - Slashdot "[A] potent new book...Intricate and superbly documented." - Boston Globe "Brian Krebs, a well-known security expert, dives deep into the history and culture of the underground world where spam gets made-and along the way touches on that community's participation in online criminal enterprises: identity theft, botnet creation, money laundering, data breaches, and much more." - Before It's News "Those wishing for a reliable tour of the shadowy world of criminal hacking and cyber thievery need look no further than Spam Nation, a new book by Brian Krebs." - Vending Times "A riveting historical thriller about the Russian bad guys behind spam and malware attacks, how it grew, why so little was accomplished to stop it & ultimately, how of late the tide has been shifting." - Newstips "Brian Krebs's blend of investigative reporting and

cybersecurity expertise makes for an informative and entertaining read." - ZDNet "I know this book review is essentially a Brian Krebs love fest. Sorry, I can't help myself. As a security pro, it's my occupation to find flaws, but I can't find one in this book. At a time when courageous journalists around the world are under threat, investigative journalism of this quality and boldness deserves to be rewarded." - InfoWorld "Inside story of the sophisticated world of spam and cyber attacks and the people and organizations behind them. It gets into the psychology and methods and relationships behind the people who send it, the few but enough who click and buy, and the rest who are unwittingly part of the system." - Medium --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Brian Krebs is an award-winning journalist and founder of the highly acclaimed cybersecurity blog KrebsOnSecurity.com. For fourteen years, Krebs was a reporter for the Washington Post, where he authored the acclaimed Security Fix blog. He has been profiled in the New York Times and Bloomberg Businessweek and has appeared on the Today Show, Good Morning America, CNN, NPR, Fox, ABC News, in the Wall Street Journal, Forbes, and more.

Spam Nation: The Inside Story of Organized Cybercrime-from Global Epidemic to Your Front Door Brian Krebs is an investigative journalist and former Washington Post staff reporter, where he covered Internet security, technology policy, cybercrime and privacy issues for the newspaper and website. Brian left the Washington Post after editorial management at WP decided that Cybercrime was an area that was a little too risky for its appetite. Brian went on to found his own Website [www.krebsonsecurity.com](http://www.krebsonsecurity.com) a daily blog dedicated to in-depth cyber-security news and investigation. Brian has become one of the most informed and prolific writers on the subject of Cybercrime. His first book SPAM Nation chronicles the activities of two leading Russian figures of the Pharmaceutical SPAM racket, Igor Gusev and Victor Vrublevsky, who leaked detailed information about the other in an effort to destroy the other. This book is a worthy read as it details the feud that developed between key Cybercrime characters and the supporting cast of corrupt banks, less than diligent ISPs, crooked bureaucrats and victims of toxic counterfeit drugs bought over the Internet from Canadian Pharmacies. These two individuals (Vrublevsky and Gusev), are responsible for a large percentage of SPAM that has plagued your and everyone else's inboxes for the past 10 years. It provides insight into motives, modus-operandi and the environment, sponsored by corrupt bureaucrats who enable Cybercrime to flourish in Eastern Europe, Russia and parts of Asia. Why is it worth reading?

Because YOU and YOUR IDENTITY are under constant threat from billions of SPAM emails and social engineering scams generated by a sophisticated, determined, patient and growing cadre of Cyber criminals. If you have not received a letter from your bank or institution where you hold a credit account offering free credit protection services, advising that you that your credentials may have been stolen and that your account may be compromised in the past 12 months, it is almost certain you will receive one in the next 12 months. Pharma Spam provided the trainer-wheels for the first generation of hackers. They made \$millions selling counterfeit pharmaceuticals, manufactured in India, sold via online "Canadian" Pharmacies to Americans who could not afford or could not acquire drugs for any number of serious illnesses and addictive needs. The Botnets that infected and continue to compromise millions of PCs, causing them to generate billions of Spam emails daily still exist. They provide a platform to develop and launch more sophisticated phishing and spear-phishing attacks. Hackers have perfected their craft in what history will record as the "wild-west" days of the Internet. Ten years ago, these miscreants were making \$millions. Now they are making \$Billions. An increasing variety of clever scams, including impersonation of senior executives using look-alike URLs to launch phishing and spear phishing attacks (social engineering), to gain access to the corporate network and commit fraud; extortion, identity theft, credit card theft, website ransom and Intellectual Property theft. The epilogue, A Spam-free World: How you can protect yourself from Cyber-crime, is worth the price of the book ten times over. If you don't want to read the book, then please observe Brian's three simple rules to protect your identity and never click on a suspicious link or a link unless you can expose and validate that the underlying hyperlink is genuine. Rule 1: If you didn't go looking for it, do not install it. Rule 2: If you installed it, update it. Rule 3: If you no longer need it, remove it. If you are interested in any subject related to Cybercrime, follow @Briankrebs on Twitter, make #Cybercrime a Twitter hashtag that you track and read daily and visit Brian's website, it's a must. Finally, if you have never heard of and don't know what "social engineering" is, then you had better do some research in a hurry, before you become the next victim of identity theft and fraud.

The writer focuses less on the concept of Spam itself, and more on his own personal involvement (from his difficulties in publishing articles in major media outlets, to his own conversations with spammers, to his findings traversing through online forums for information). This gives the story told in the book a certain granularity by extracting sub stories from the bigger picture.

It's written more like an extended piece by an investigative journalist, and less like the work that a historian or enthusiast might tell. Where the book does become a bit broader is in its definition of Spam, to include fraud & phishing, and the stories the writer tells of people's experience with online pharmaceuticals (an aside from the rest of the content in which he seemed to be much more personally involved). I always liked these stories, and found them to be the captivating part of the book. For the right audience, this is a great book. One who wants to hear about Krebs's struggles and ongoing investigation would be very satisfied (and it's worth noting that he is a very authoritative source on the subject. His blog is routinely cited by the media and his involvement in the topic extends past the publish date of this book). However, for a passive observer that wants a bit of a broader history, told more like a story, and a more summarized version of personal conversations, events, etc this book doesn't quite hit the mark.

The Washington Post chickened out and wouldn't permit their reporter Brian Krebs to follow the story he had uncovered. He turned down the security of the tech beat job they offered and instead he continued his in-depth investigative research and the result is this book. A fast read and a must-read for business and tech executives everywhere. While he does discuss the "denial of service" attacks on his website, Brian has left out some of the other drama that has accompanied his cyber-crime reporting including the SWATting incident at his home and the various items sent to his house as veiled threats, including: "a gram of heroin, a giant bag of feces, an enormous cross-shaped funeral arrangement." Apparently not all of these were directly tied to the Spam research, but they are examples of how threatened the miscreants feel when Brian is on their tale (pun intended). Not only is this book a good read, but his blog (google search: Krebs on Security) is guaranteed to keep you up to date with the various scams and criminal activities that run rampant on the internet. I highly recommend both the blog and his book.

A compelling, well-researched, well-written narrative of how Russian criminals fed American demand for pharmaceuticals and triggered the spam wars that thrashed the Internet during the first two decades of the 21st century. It's not as technical as I had hoped. There are more personality clashes and first-person accounts of the author's feelings and legwork than pcap files and source code. Also, the lack of an index, descriptive rather than flavorful chapter names, and chapter indicators rather than title indicator on the pages make this difficult to study rather than read as a straight-through narrative. (This applies to my hardcover Sourcebooks first edition, first printing.)

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