Make your password longer, more complex - cloud hackers on the way

Posted At : December 1, 2010 4:27 PM | Posted By : Michael Smith
Related Categories: Cool Stuff

It used to be a six character password would take days to crack and the help of powerful expensive computers. Not any more. Amazon's cloud computing, useful for rapidly scalable graphics and database projects, can also be used by hackers to create a cheap super computer password hacker system that can crack a password in less than an hour for a cost of $2.10. So make your passwords longer and more complex (upper case and lower case letters, numbers, and special symbols such as !@#$%^&*()_+)

A German researcher demonstrated the technique using Amazon's Elastic Compute Cloud and their new cluster-computing service that is designed for CPU-intensive graphics. Graphics and password cracking are remarkably similar from an algorithmic perspective: matrix and vector math. The results are quite instructive: using just 49 minutes of a single cluster instance, the researcher was able to crack passwords up to six letters in length. The total cost of the experiment: $2.10 for one hour of computing (the minimum charge is one hour).

For a hacker, there are two great sources for on-demand computing: botnets made of consumer PCs and infrastructure-as-a-service (IaaS) from a service provider. Either one can deliver computing-on-demand for the purpose of brute-force computation. Botnets are unreliable, heterogeneous and will take longer to "provision." But they cost nothing to use and can scale to enormous size; researchers have found botnets composed of hundreds of thousands of PCs. A commercial cloud-computing offering will be faster to provision, have predictable performance and can be billed to a stolen credit card.

More at http://www.networkworld.com/columnists/2010/111710antonopoulos.html