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Reflections of **Better Business**

Your guide to technology and an error-free computer environment

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By: **RB Balch & Associates, Inc.** Full service, award winning computer consulting firm. Serving AZ since 93.

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## **SPECIALS THIS MONTH**

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**DECEMBER – HOLIDAY Special.** A very happy new year to you and your family – and have a great holiday season – celebrating in your own special way. We're excited that we're approaching our 15<sup>th</sup> year – FEB 1<sup>st</sup>. FOR THE HOLIDAYS - mention this newsletter for \$25 OFF your invoice this month - you can use our HOLIDAY special for multiple visits during the month of DECEMBER (one discount per day).

REMINDER: we can help you “build” a new computer online with Dell – we do not markup – same pricing ordering with us or from Dell. We can order for you (no fee to order), bring and setup. And...year-end is generally the best time to buy – you’ll see some pretty good offers. Right now, servers about 30%+ off.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

Contact us at 623-561-9366 OR at [help@rbbalch.com](mailto:help@rbbalch.com) OR online from our website [www.rbbalch.com](http://www.rbbalch.com) to schedule online. **If you schedule online, you’ll save an additional \$5 off your next appointment.**

## **REMOTE TECHNICAL SUPPORT**

Contact us for remote technical support - it's easy, fast, less interruptions at the office and less expensive for you! (1/2 hour minimum)

Our motto: "you don't have a problem until you have a problem". Think about it. Contact Rochelle at [rb@rbbalch.com](mailto:rb@rbbalch.com).

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## 2 TECHNOLOGY/COMPUTER TIP

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### **THIS MONTH: Understanding Rootkits and Botnets**

NOTE: The article below is from the [www.US-CERT.gov](http://www.US-CERT.gov) site. You can see the article online at <http://www.us-cert.gov/cas/tips/ST06-001pr.html>.

We've been experiencing more and more "rootkit" attacks and finding more "botnets"; you may have received our "botnet" virus alert last month. Please read this article carefully.

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### **US-CERT National Cyber Alert System [www.us-cert.gov](http://www.us-cert.gov)**

The United States Computer Emergency Readiness Team (US-CERT) is a partnership between the Department of Homeland Security and the public and private sectors. Established in 2003 to protect the nation's Internet infrastructure, US-CERT coordinates defense against and responses to cyber attacks across the nation.

### **Understanding Hidden Threats: Rootkits and Botnets**

#### **What are rootkits and botnets?**

A rootkit is a piece of software that can be installed and hidden on your computer without your knowledge. It may be included in a larger software package or installed by an attacker who has been able to take advantage of a vulnerability on your computer or has convinced you to download it (see [Avoiding Social Engineering and Phishing Attacks](#) for more information). Rootkits are not necessarily malicious, but they may hide malicious activities. Attackers may be able to access information, monitor your actions, modify programs, or perform other functions on your computer without being detected.

Botnet is a term derived from the idea of bot networks. In its most basic form, a bot is simply an automated computer program, or robot. In the context of botnets, bots refer to computers that are able to be controlled by one, or many, outside sources. An attacker usually gains control by infecting the computers with a virus or other malicious code that gives the attacker access. Your computer may be part of a botnet even though it appears to be operating normally. Botnets are often used to conduct a range of activities, from distributing spam and viruses to conducting denial-of-service attacks (see [Understanding Denial-of-Service Attacks](#) for more information).

#### **Why are they considered threats?**

The main problem with both rootkits and botnets is that they are hidden. Although botnets are not hidden the same way rootkits are, they may be undetected unless you are specifically looking for certain activity. If a rootkit has been installed, you may not be aware that your computer has been compromised, and traditional anti-virus software may not be able to detect the malicious programs. Attackers are also creating more sophisticated programs that update themselves so that they are even harder to detect.

Attackers can use rootkits and botnets to access and modify personal information, attack other computers, and commit other crimes, all while remaining undetected. By using multiple computers, attackers increase the range and impact of their crimes. Because each computer in a botnet can be programmed to execute the same command, an attacker can have each of them scanning multiple computers for vulnerabilities, monitoring online activity, or collecting the information entered in online forms.

### **What can you do to protect yourself?**

If you practice good security habits, you may reduce the risk that your computer will be compromised:

- **Use and maintain anti-virus software** - Anti-virus software recognizes and protects your computer against most known viruses, so you may be able to detect and remove the virus before it can do any damage (see [Understanding Anti-Virus Software](#) for more information). Because attackers are continually writing new viruses, it is important to keep your definitions up to date. Some anti-virus vendors also offer anti-rootkit software.
- **Install a firewall** - Firewalls may be able to prevent some types of infection by blocking malicious traffic before it can enter your computer and limiting the traffic you send (see [Understanding Firewalls](#) for more information). Some operating systems actually include a firewall, but you need to make sure it is enabled.
- **Use good passwords** - Select passwords that will be difficult for attackers to guess, and use different passwords for different programs and devices (see [Choosing and Protecting Passwords](#) for more information). Do not choose options that allow your computer to remember your passwords.
- **Keep software up to date** - Install software patches so that attackers can't take advantage of known problems or vulnerabilities (see [Understanding Patches](#) for more information). Many operating systems offer automatic updates. If this option is available, you should enable it.
- **Follow good security practices** - Take appropriate precautions when using email and web browsers to reduce the risk that your actions will trigger an infection (see other [US-CERT security tips](#) for more information).

Unfortunately, if there is a rootkit on your computer or an attacker is using your computer in a botnet, you may not know it. Even if you do discover that you are a victim, it is difficult for the average user to effectively recover. The attacker may have modified files on your computer, so simply removing the malicious files may not solve the problem. If you believe that you are a victim, consider contacting a trained system administrator.

As an alternative, some vendors are developing products and tools that may remove a rootkit from your computer. If the software cannot locate and remove the infection, you may need to reinstall your operating system, usually with a system restore disk that is often supplied with a new computer. Note that reinstalling or restoring the operating system typically erases all of your files and any additional software that you have installed on your computer.

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Author: Mindi McDowell

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Need help to secure your computer environment? Let us help. Contact us at [help@rbbalch.com](mailto:help@rbbalch.com) 623-561-9366 or Rochelle directly at [rb@rbbalch.com](mailto:rb@rbbalch.com) OR schedule on-line at [www.rbbalch.com](http://www.rbbalch.com)

**Have an idea for a topic? Just let us know – or send in your questions to [help@rbbalch.com](mailto:help@rbbalch.com). Was this article helpful? Please let us know.**

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### **3 Andy's Did You Know?**

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*By Andy Karpel, the "A lot about nothing" expert*

#### **MONTH: DECEMBER**

**Birthstone:** Tanzanite, Zircon, and Turquoise    **Meaning:** Prosperity

The three birthstones associated with December are Tanzanite, Zircon, and Turquoise.

Discovered in the late 1960s in Tanzania, and found exclusively in this tiny area of the world, tanzanite exhibits a rich violet-blue color for which the gemstone is treasured; often it is heat-treated to achieve this color. Colors range from blue to purple, and tanzanites that are medium dark in tone, vivid in saturation, and slightly violet blue command premium prices. As tanzanite can be less expensive than sapphire, it often was purchased as an alternative. However, it has increased in popularity and now is valued more for its own beauty and brilliance than as a sapphire substitute.

Derived from the Arabic words zar and gun, meaning gold and color, zircon is found in a wide range of colors such as: blue, yellow, orange, brown, green, colorless, and red (the most prized color). For many years colorless zircon was used to imitate diamonds. Folk wisdom grants zircon the power to relieve pain, whet the appetite, protect travelers from disease and injury, to ensure a warm welcome, and to prevent nightmares guaranteeing a deep, tranquil sleep. Major sources of zircon are the Chanthaburi area of Thailand, the Palin area of Cambodia, and the southern part of Vietnam.

The name turquoise, from the French expression Pierre tourques or Turkish stone, originated in the thirteenth century and describes one of the oldest known gemstones. Turquoise varies in color from greenish blue, through robin's egg-blue, to sky blue shades and its transparency ranges from translucent to opaque. Turquoise is plentiful and is available in a wide range of sizes. It is most often used for beads,

cabochons, carvings, and inlays. Although its popularity fluctuates in fashion, it is a perennial favorite in the American Southwest

**Flower:** Narcissus, Holly

**Astrological Sign(s):** Sagittarius The Archer Nov. 22 - Dec. 21

Capricorn The Goat Dec. 22 - Jan. 19

**Moon Phases:** Dec 1 Last – Dec 9 New – Dec 17 1st Qtr – Dec 23 Full – Dec 31 Last

Sunday, December 2 Advent begins

Tuesday, Dec 4 Chanukah at sundown - lasts 8 days

Friday, Dec 7 Pearl Harbor Day

Wednesday, Dec 12 Poinsettia Day

Thursday, Dec 20 Louisiana Purchase completed in New Orleans. (1803)

Thursday, Dec 20 Eid-UI-Adha (Festival of the Sacrifice) lasting four days.

Friday, Dec 21 Winter Solstice (shortest day of the year)

Tuesday, Dec 25 Christmas Day

Wednesday, 26 or 27 Boxing Day find out why the 26th or 27<sup>th</sup> year.

Wednesday, Dec 26 Kwanzaa

Monday, Dec 31 New Year's Eve

**Andy's "I didn't know that"** December 7th Pearl Harbor Day - Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day. This day commemorates the Japanese attack on the U.S. Naval base at Pearl Harbor. The attack began at dawn December 7, 1941. It crippled the U.S. Pacific Fleet, and caused the U.S. to enter World War II. The first wave of Japanese planes, made up of 51 Val dive bombers, 50 high level bombers, 43 Zero fighters and 40 Kate torpedo bombers, attacked when flight commander Mitsuo Fuchida gave the now infamous battle cry "Tora! Tora! Tora!" ("Tiger! Tiger! Tiger!"). The second wave arrived shortly thereafter.

Almost simultaneously, five Japanese "minisubs" began their attack from underwater, but were able to do little damage. Less than two hours later, 2,280 American servicemen and 68 civilians were dead, 1,109 were wounded, eight battleships were damaged and five sunk. Three light cruisers, three destroyers, and three smaller boats were lost, along with 188 aircraft.

The biggest loss that day was the *USS Arizona*, on which 1,177 crewmen were killed when a 1,760 pound bomb smashed through her decks and ignited her forward ammo magazine causing a terrible explosion. Fewer than nine minutes later she was underwater. You can still visit the memorial that floats over the sunken *Arizona*.

On Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, U.S. flags are to be flown at half staff. On December 8, 1941 President Franklin D. Roosevelt stated in a speech to Congress it was "**..a day that will live in infamy**". The U.S. then declared war on Japan. ....**And now you have the FACTS**

### **Andy's second hand "tidbits"**

**YOU KNOW YOU ARE LIVING IN 2007 when...**1. You accidentally enter your PIN on the microwave. 2. You haven't played solitaire with real cards in years. 3. You have a list of 15 phone numbers to reach your family of three. 4. You e-mail the person who works at the desk next to you. 5. Your reason for not staying in touch with friends and family is that they don't have e-mail addresses. 6. You pull up in your own driveway and use your cell phone to see if anyone is home to help you carry in the groceries. 7. Commercials on television have a web site 8. Leaving the house without your cell phone, which you didn't even have the first 20 or 30 (or 60) years of your life, is now a cause for panic and you turn around to go and get it. 10. You get up in the morning and go on line before getting your coffee. 11. You start tilting your head sideways to smile. 12. You are too busy to notice there was no #9 on this list. 13. But you actually looked back up to check that there wasn't a #9 on this list.

### **YET MORE important useless information**

You Think English is Easy???

Can you read these right the first time?

- 1) The bandage was wound around the wound.
- 2) The farm was used to produce produce.
- 3) The dump was so full that it had to refuse more refuse.
- 4) We must polish the Polish furniture.
- 5) He could lead if he would get the lead out.
- 6) The soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert.
- 7) Since there is no time like the present , he thought it was time to present the present .
- 8) A bass was painted on the head of the bass drum.
- 9) When shot at, the dove dove into the bushes.
- 10) I did not object to the object.
- 11) The insurance was invalid for the invalid.
- 12) There was a row among the oarsmen about how to row .
- 13) They were too close to the door to close it.
- 14) The buck does funny things when the does are present.

- 15) A seamstress and a sewer fell down into a sewer line.
- 16) To help with planting, the farmer taught his sow to sow.
- 17) The wind was too strong to wind the sail.
- 18) Upon seeing the tear in the painting, I shed a tear.
- 19) I had to subject the subject to a series of tests.
- 20) How can I intimate this to my most intimate friend?

**Holiday test:**

**#1 - Count every " F " in the following text:** FINISHED FILES ARE THE RESULT OF YEARS OF SCIENTIFIC STUDY COMBINED WITH THE EXPERIENCE OF YEARS... OK HOW MANY? (see below)

#2 - Olny srmat poelpe can raed tihs. I cdnuolt blveiee taht I cluod aulaclyt uesdnatnrd waht I was rdanieg. The phaonmneal pweor of the hmuan mnid, aoccdnig to a rscheearch at a Uinervtisy, it deosn't mttar in waht oredr the ltteers in a wrod are, the olny iprmoatnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be in the rghit pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can sitll raed it wouthit a porbelm. Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe. Yaeh and I awlyas tghuhot spleling was ipmorant!!! Guess not...

Answer: Your answer should be 6 -- oops you didn't get that. READ IT AGAIN ! The reasoning behind is the brain cannot process "OF". Scouring says Anyone who counts all 6 "F's" on the first go is a genius. 3 is normal, 4 is quite rare.

**Quotes:**

Many banks have a new kind of Christmas club in operation.  
The new club helps you save money to pay for last year's gifts.  
- Unknown

A simple friend opens a conversation with a full news bulletin on his life. A real friend says, What's new with you? - Unknown



**4 Community Update**



RB Balch recently interviewed by the LA TIMES (on small business and healthcare) and for Discover Card (on small business and finances).

RB Balch is proud member of:

Arizona Small Business Association (ASBA) - Chamber of Commerce - National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) - Better Business Bureau (BBB).

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## 5 RB Balch. WHY do we issue this and WHO are we?

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WHY: Purpose of this newsletter?

To help you learn more about technology and computers

To be informal and informative

To answer specific questions asked by readers

....To continue our commitment of keeping you informed

Reflections of **Better Business** (published since 1994) is for employees, clients, friends and associates of **RB Balch**.

WHO ARE WE: RB Balch. IT Computer Consulting firm. Established 02/93. Experienced. Reliable. Ethical. Good. Revenues since 1993 over \$23 million. Our mission is to be your one source solution for all of your computer needs. Consider us your "computer guy", your IT department. We're only an email or phone call away.

**SERVICES: PC Field Support - IT Consulting, Software Development Projects, Business/Marketing Consulting, Seminars & Keynotes.**

*PC Field Support – IT Consulting:* PC troubleshooting, network installation and maintenance, server and workstation setup/support, hardware and software upgrades, virus and spyware detection & repair, data recovery, backup/restore, programming, web design, web and email hosting, more. Troubleshooting is our specialty. Contact us as needed, or set-up recurring GOLD maintenance appointments (discounted, no contracts, no pre-paid bundle of hours required). We come to you.

*Software Development Projects:* PC development, no job too small. We specialize in projects 1 to 500 hours (longer projects also accepted). New or maintenance. Simple changes or complex systems. Programming, Databases, Web design, Contingency plans/strategy plans, etc. Available nationally.

*Business Consulting:* Utilize technology to help you grow your business - we're here to help. IT strategies, Disaster/recovery planning, IT security audits. Marketing and promotional plans.

*Seminars, Keynotes:* Technology and Motivational workshops, keynotes and lunch programs for your staff or association. As a successful entrepreneur and award winning business owner, Rochelle Balch,

president RB Balch and international professional speaker (member of the National Speakers Association), is available for programs for technology, team building, marketing and business, and personal development. Get everyone on the same page to understand technology in your company. Mention this newsletter for discount off speaking fees. For sample topics see <http://www.rochellebalch.com>

**Appointments:** We offer, and highly recommend, regularly scheduled GOLD maintenance appointments. We offer on call/as needed service and emergency service. We are available weekends/evenings/holidays, and on special retainer, if required. No pre-pays, change frequency or cancel maintenance appointments at any time. Contact us at [help@rbbalch.com](mailto:help@rbbalch.com), at 623-561-9366, or visit our web site at [www.rbbalch.com](http://www.rbbalch.com) for on-line scheduling. Contact Rochelle Balch directly at [rb@rbbalch.com](mailto:rb@rbbalch.com) or contact Andy Karpel directly at [andy@rbbalch.com](mailto:andy@rbbalch.com) if you like.

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## MAINTENANCE

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To be added or removed from our newsletter, go to: <http://www.rbbalch.com> and click on the Newsletter box on the right. OR call us OR simply reply to this email and write remove in the message or subject.

Your email address is absolutely only used by us at RB Balch.

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RB Balch Computer Consultants

PO BOX 10007

Glendale, AZ 85318

<mailto:help@rbbalch.com>

623-561-9366

1-800-922-5249 (1-800-9-BALCH-9)

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