



GOP cyber-security expert suggests Diebold tampered with 2002 election

07/18/2008 @ 12:10 pm

Filed by Larisa Alexandrovna and Muriel Kane

A leading cyber-security expert and former adviser to Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) says he has fresh evidence regarding election fraud on Diebold electronic voting machines during the 2002 Georgia gubernatorial and senatorial elections.

Stephen Spoonamore is the founder and until recently the CEO of Cybrinth LLC, an information technology policy and security firm that serves Fortune 100 companies. At a little noticed press conference in Columbus, Ohio Thursday, he discussed his investigation of a computer patch that was applied to Diebold Election Systems voting machines in Georgia right before that state's November 2002 election.



Spoonamore is one of the most prominent cyber-security experts in the country. He has appeared on CNN's Lou Dobbs and ABC's World News Tonight, and has security clearances from his work with the intelligence community and other government agencies, as well as the Department of Defense, and is one of the world's leading authorities on hacking and cyber-espionage.

In 1995, Spoonamore received a civilian citation for his work with the Department of Defense. He was again recognized for his contributions in 2004 by the Department of Homeland Security. Spoonamore is also a registered Republican and until recently was advising the McCain campaign.


Advertisement

Don't miss your chance to

LIVE AND WORK in the USA!

Take now

Take later



Spoonamore received the Diebold patch from a whistleblower close to the office of Cathy Cox,

Georgia's then-Secretary of State. In discussions with RAW STORY, the whistleblower -- who wishes to remain anonymous for fear of retaliation -- said that he became suspicious of Diebold's actions in Georgia for two reasons. The first red flag went up when the computer patch was installed in person by Diebold CEO Bob Urosevich, who flew in from Texas and applied it in just two counties, DeKalb and Fulton, both Democratic strongholds. The source states that Cox was not privy to these changes until after the election and that she became particularly concerned over the patch being installed in just those two counties.

The whistleblower said another flag went up when it became apparent that the patch installed by Urosevich had failed to fix a problem with the computer clock, which employees from Diebold and the Georgia Secretary of State's office had been told the patch was designed specifically to address.

Some critics of electronic voting raised questions about the 2002 Georgia race even at the time. Incumbent Democratic Sen. Max Cleland, who was five percentage points ahead of Republican challenger Saxby Chambliss in polls taken a week before the vote, lost 53% to 46%. Incumbent Democratic Governor Roy Barnes, who led challenger Sonny Perdue in the polls by eleven points, lost 51% to 46%. However, because the Diebold machines used throughout the state provided no paper trail, it was impossible to ask for a recount in either case.

Concerned by the electoral outcome, the whistleblower approached Spoonamore because of his qualifications and asked him to examine the Diebold patch.

McCain adviser reported patch to Justice Department

The Ohio press conference was organized by Cliff Arnebeck and three other attorneys, who had filed a challenge to the results of that the 2004 presidential election in Ohio in December, 2004. That challenge was withdrawn, but in August 2006 Arnebeck filed a new case, King Lincoln Bronzeville Neighborhood Association v. Blackwell, alleging civil rights violations in the 2004 voting. The case was stayed in 2007. On Thursday, Arnebeck filed a motion to remove the stay and allow fresh investigation.

Individuals close to Arnebeck's office said Spoonamore confirmed that the patch included nothing to repair a clock problem. Instead, he identified two parallel programs, both having the full software code and even the same audio instructions for the deaf. Spoonamore said he could not understand the need for a second copy of the exact same program -- and without access to the machine for which the patch was designed, he could not learn more. Instead, he said he took the evidence to the Cyber-Security Division of the Department of Justice and reported the series of events to authorities. The Justice Department has not yet acted on his report.

Allegations surrounding Ohio in 2004

At the Ohio press conference yesterday, the former McCain adviser said Michael Connell, of the Republican Internet development firm New Media Communications, had designed a system that made possible the real-time "tuning" of election tabulators once Ohio Secretary of State Kenneth Blackwell had outsourced the hosting of vote counting on the same server which hosted GOP campaign IT systems. He said he didn't believe Connell was behind the alleged fraud, but that he should be considered a key witness.

Spoonamore also confirmed he's working with Connell on overseas election issues and that Connell is now working as John McCain's [IT developer](#).

Connell has a [long history](#) with the Republican Party's IT infrastructure. In 2001, for example, he set up MajorityWhip.gov for then House Majority Whip Tom DeLay. He also helped built georgewbush.com, as well as the Ohio GOP site Spoonamore referenced.

Sources close to Spoonamore said he was very concerned that he would lose his contracts as a result of coming forward and would take a "large financial hit." These sources added that, despite his concerns, Spoonamore felt obligated to reveal what he knows to the public. "He felt he had no choice as an American citizen but to come forward, and he also knows the likely consequences of him doing so," one source said.

An audio file of the press conference is available [here](#).