

IS/IT Engineer, R&D - Machine Learning & Imaging (MSc,PhD)
P.O. Box 13685, P.O. 10310, Athens, Greece
Email: harris@xgeorgio.info
Url: <http://xgeorgio.info>

Harris Georgiou (Mr.) · P.O. Box 13685 · P.O. 10310 · Athens · Greece

To: IEEE Computer magazine (editorial board)
Cc: Hal Berghel ('Out of Band' column editor)
Cc: Ron Vetter (Editor in Chief)

Athens, Greece, April 20, 2012

Comments regarding the 'Out of Band' article in March 2012 issue of IEEE Computer magazine.

Dear sirs,

I find myself compelled to write to the editorial board of the IEEE Computer magazine, one of the most recognized and highly-respected scientific journals in the field, to express my deepest concerns about the quality and the scope of the 'Outof Band' article by Mr. Hal Berghel, in the March 2012 issue.

I believe the subject is somewhat relevant to the scope of the magazine; however, the content of this particular article is far from scientific, nor objective, nor relevant to what the readers expect to find in such a high-quality magazine.

From the very first paragraph, the author characterizes private Bradley Manning as *'...a socially awkward, somewhat unstable US Army private...'* and later on he characterizes him as *'...disputatious...'*. Following that, he mentions Adrian Lamo as *'...a convicted computer hacker/snitch with both Asperger's syndrome and other alleged personal issues...'*. It is my understanding that private Manning is currently under US Army court procedures, hence these characterizations not only insult the person but could also be viewed under the scope of biasing against his legal defense. And of course, I do not think that anyone could find a solid justification, scientific or other, for involving someone's health condition to any wrongdoing with regard to information disclosing or systems security, without violating the most basic human rights.

On the core issue of the information disclosure, the author states early on that the data were *'...uploaded to Wikileaks without permission: stolen, pure and simple...'* and later on that *'...The majority of observers seem to accept the stolen and leaked documents explanation...'*. What the author should add to these assertions is that the first fact comes only

by US Army law, that it is currently under court procedures (therefore undetermined as of now) and that essentially the 'targets' of these disclosures were mostly foreign *allied* governments that did not see these information as a bad thing (quite the opposite). Second, the author refers to the '*majority of observers*' without naming any specific individual or authority. Furthermore, he refers to Z. Brzezinski's viewpoint that hints a possible act of direct espionage by J. Assange and Wikileaks.

All these assertions have nothing to do with the scope and the scientific nature of the magazine. It does not matter whether someone agrees or not. What matters is that this clearly personal and essentially political (non-scientific) opinion has no place in this magazine. The author could state his personal opinion as such, in a much more polite and scope-relevant manner, and mention that the US Army's failure on the security aspects or the US Government's embarrassment about these disclosures have absolutely nothing to do with whether the relevant content is genuine, disputable or even relevant to the 'security' matter in the first place (as it should, in such an article).

I have to say, this is not the first time¹ an IEEE magazine of purely scientific nature publishes articles with clearly personal and political views. Sadly, this is the main reason why many of my colleagues and I have cancelled our personal subscriptions to IEEE, for the second time I should say, because some of its 'magazines' are still heavily influenced by views and opinions very far from the scientific scope and professional objectivism that it is expected in their contents.

Please do not perceive this letter as an attempt to refute the author's personal views on the subject nor as a defense to any of the persons involved in the Wikileaks-Assange-Manning case. This would be a violation, by myself, of the same principles and expectations I mention earlier. However, I kindly urge you to consider this complaint as a constructive feedback for the quality of the magazine.

Sincerely,

H.G.

¹J.E.Gover, P.G.Huray, 'Not so unthinkable [nuclear weapons]', IEEE Spectrum, Vol.40, No.3, March 2003, pp. 15-16 – <http://dx.doi.org/10.1109/MSPEC.2003.1184438>