



About the Author

Why should I have been the person to write this book? Well, I seem to have accumulated the right mix of experience and qualifications over the last 25 years. I graduated in mathematics and natural science from Cambridge (England) in the 1970s, and got a qualification in computer engineering; my first proper job was in avionics; and I became interested in cryptology and computer security in the mid-1980s. After working in the banking industry for several years, I started doing consultancy for companies that designed equipment for banks, and then working on other applications of this technology, such as prepayment electricity meters.

I moved to academia in 1992, but continued to consult to industry on security technology. During the 1990s, the number of applications that employed cryptology rose rapidly: burglar alarms, car door locks, road toll tags, and satellite TV encryption systems all made their appearance. As the first legal disputes about these systems came along, I was lucky enough to be an expert witness in some of the important cases. The research team I lead had the good fortune to be in the right place at the right time when several crucial technologies, such as tamper resistance and digital watermarking, became hot topics.

By about 1996, it started to become clear to me that the existing textbooks were too specialized. The security textbooks focused on the access control mechanisms in operating systems, while the cryptology books gave very detailed expositions of the design of cryptographic algorithms and protocols. These topics are interesting, and important. However they are only part of the story. Most system designers are not overly concerned with crypto or operating system internals, but with how to use these tools effectively. They are quite right in this, as the inappropriate use of mechanisms is one of the main causes of security failure. I was encouraged by the success of a number

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of articles I wrote on security engineering (starting with 'Why Cryptosystems Fail' in 1993); and the need to teach an undergraduate class in security led to the development of a set of lecture notes that made up about half of this book. Finally, in 1999, I got round to rewriting them for a general technical audience.

I have learned a lot in the process; writing down what you think you know is a good way of finding out what you don't. I have also had a lot of fun. I hope you have as much fun reading it!



Acknowledgments

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while Frank also helped with the following two chapters. The material on medical systems was originally developed with a number of people at the British Medical Association, most notably Fleur Fisher, Simon Jenkins, and Grant Kelly. Denise Schmandt-Besserat taught the world about bullae, which provided the background for the chapter on banking systems; that chapter was also strengthened by input from Fay Hider and Willie List. The chapter on alarms contains much that I was taught by Roger Needham, Peter Dean, John Martin, Frank Clish, and Gary Geldart. Nuclear command and control systems are much the brainchild of Gus Simmons; he and Bob Morris taught me much of what's in that chapter.

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Legal Notice

I cannot emphasize too strongly that the tricks taught in this book are intended only to enable you to build better systems. They are not in any way given as a means of helping you to break into systems, subvert copyright protection mechanisms, or do anything else unethical or illegal.

Where possible I have tried to give case histories at a level of detail that illustrates the underlying principles without giving a ‘hacker’s cookbook’.

Should This Book Be Published at All?

There are people who believe that the knowledge contained in this book should not be published. This is an old debate; in previous centuries, people objected to the publication of books on locksmithing, on the grounds that they were likely to help the bad guys more than the good guys.

I think that these fears are answered in the first book in English that discussed cryptology. This was a treatise on optical and acoustic telegraphy written by Bishop John Wilkins in 1641 [805]. He traced scientific censorship back to the Egyptian priests who forbade the use of alphabetic writing on the grounds that it would spread literacy among the common people and thus foster dissent. As he said:

*It will not follow that everything must be suppressed which may be abused. . .
If all those useful inventions that are liable to abuse should therefore be
concealed there is not any Art or Science which may be lawfully profest.*

The question was raised again in the nineteenth century, when some well-meaning people wanted to ban books on locksmithing. A contemporary writer on the subject replied [750]:

Many well-meaning persons suppose that the discussion respecting the means for baffling the supposed safety of locks offers a premium for dishonesty, by showing others how to be dishonest. This is a fallacy. Rogues are very keen in their profession, and already know much more than we can teach them respecting their several kinds of roguery. Rogues knew a good deal about lockpicking long before locksmiths discussed it among themselves ... if there be harm, it will be much more than counterbalanced by good.

These views have been borne out by long experience since. As for me, I worked for two separate banks for three and a half years on cash machine security, but I learned significant new tricks from a document written by a convicted card fraudster that circulated in the U.K. prison system. Many government agencies are now coming round to this point of view. It is encouraging to see, for example, that the U.S. National Security Agency has published the specifications of the encryption algorithm (Skipjack) and the key management protocol (KEA) used to protect secret U.S. government traffic. Their judgment is clearly that the potential harm done by letting the Iraqis use a decent encryption algorithm is less than the good that will be done by having commercial off-the-shelf software compatible with Federal encryption standards.

In short, while some bad guys will benefit from a book such as this, they mostly know the tricks already, and the good guys will benefit much more.