Vincent Canfield's Blog

I Had All of My Electronics (That I had at the time) Seized by U.S. Customs and Border Protection

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By vc

After my trip in Hamburg, Germany, for the 33rd Chaos Communication Congress, I left Germany for the United States for a short vacation to visit family and friends. Upon my arrival in the United States, I was detained by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) where my belongings were picked apart and I was asked lots of strange, some offensive questions about my personal life. I refused to answer any questions and instead gave them the contact information for my lawyer. They demanded I decrypt my phone so they could "make sure there isn't any bad stuff on there". When I told them no, they said they would seize all of my electronics and search all of them for "contraband". I persisted and they seized about $2,000 worth of electronics and told me I would "get them back". We'll see about that. In total I was detained over 3 hours by CBP alone, and despite that CBP documentation says that I can notify someone of my detainment if I have been detained for more than 2 hours, I was not allowed to even after that point. This seems to have been a violation of CBP policy.

17. Reason for Detention: *Electronic Device Inspection*

18. Tests or Inquiries to be Conducted:

19. PROPERTY (By Line Item) Attach CBP 58 if conveyance

a. Line Item No.	b. Description	c. Packages Number	Type	d. Measurement Qty.	UM	e. Est. Dom. Value	f. Samples Sent to the CBP Lab Yes or No	Date
001	LG G5 Cellphone			1		$	Yes☐ No☐	/ /
002	Cellphone Batteries			6.		$	Yes☐ No☐	/ /
003	San Disk SSD			1		$	Yes☐ No☐	/ /
004.	Sandisk USB Drive			1		$	Yes☐ No☐	/ /
005	Shure Headphones.			1		$	Yes☐ No☐	/ /
006	LG European plug.			1		$	Yes☐ No☐	/ /
007	USB to USBC Cable			1		$	Yes☐ No☐	/ /
008	Lenovo Battery			1		$	Yes☐ No☐	/ /
009	Lenovo power cable (2 pieces)			1		$	Yes☐ No☐	/ /
010	Lenovo Laptop w/ Battery			1		$	Yes☐ No☐	/ /
011	Blue Microphone			1		$	Yes☐ No☐	/ /
012	Kindle Keyboard			1		$	Yes☐ No☐	/ /
013	DVB USB Radio Antenna.			1		$	Yes☐ No☐	/ /
014.	Sennheiser Headphones (2 pieces)			1		$	Yes☐ No☐	/ /

Sorry for spilling shit on it.

As you can see, "all electronics" doesn't just mean storage devices. I had always physically removed my SSD from my computer because I hypothesized it might have been this way, but no, they even took my micro USB cable because

it can technically plug into my kindle which can plug into my laptop which can plug into my phone so they took it. Bastards.

I had brought both pairs of headphones and the microphone I use for voice chat, so until I replace those I don't have a way outside of my phone to talk to people over voice.

All of my devices are encrypted. Though I'll be doing some key rotation as a result of this, I'm confident none of the devices will be able to be decrypted.

I have an insurance file of sorts given to certain trustees which is to be used in just about this exact case. Without going into too much detail, this file when properly decrypted can be used to regain access to the tools I need to work on cock.li and do my job. I successfully received this file, but wasn't able to decrypt it because I couldn't remember the passphrase. Must have been something super duper secure.

Since that didn't work out, I took the next 3 weeks and took a real vacation. I checked on the site's status page to make sure there were no problems, but since everything was more or less fine, I just came back to Romania when I was finished doing all the cool shit I wanted to do. Things were less than ideal, but it felt really refreshing to take some time away from it all, you know?

There was only one person who purchased a cockbox in this time, and any cockbox customer who was inconvenienced by my absence will receive a nice fluffy credit to make up for it.

On my leaving the U.S., I was also stopped by two CBP officers, who pulled me into a private area (the jetway for my flight that was unused at the time) and questioned me again. These officers refused to identify themselves to me at all, which is interesting considering all of the officers on my inbound flight identified themselves. They went through my carry-on bag -- my checked bag was already checked, and though I know TSA opened up and went through my checked bag, I don't know if it was a customs inspection. My only phone was an unlocked burner I had purchased and had only porn open in my browser, so I let them search it which seemed to quench their thirst and cleared me for my flight (or maybe they just like nude anime girls with MAGA hats -- me too).

My future plans include implementing a periodic review of my insurance file, including decrypting, using, and updating it so I can travel over the border without getting harassed in the future.

I'd like to extend a special thanks to all of my friends that pulled together to make my trip easier for me. Whether it was checking on my home servers, contacting other people I couldn't reach, answering questions to quell fears I had died / been compromised, or providing me with server resources where I could store photos I took during my trip, you all made this trip a breeze and though the circumstances could have been better, I really did enjoy my vacation.

Unfortunately, though it will depend if I get my electronics back and what my lawyer comes back with regarding *why* I was repeatedly searched, it seems I will not be coming to DEFCON this year. Sorry.

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