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SETI@home's Website Hacked

From: Stig Agermose <stig.agermose@get2net.dk>
Date: Wed, 07 Jul 1999 02:09:27
Fwd Date: Tue, 06 Jul 1999 23:12:36 -0400
Subject: SETI@home's Website Hacked

Source: BBC News Online,

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Stig

Monday, July 5, 1999

Published at 21:32 GMT 22:32 UK

Sci/Tech

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Furry puppet turns up in ET search

Greetings to the people of planet Earth

By BBC News Online Science Editor Dr David Whitehouse

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The SETI@home Website, a project that processes data collected by radio telescopes in a Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence project has been hacked.

For about five hours on Sunday, the home page was replaced with a single word - "WANTED" - and an image of ALF, an extraterrestrial from a US TV sitcom of the same name.

Those who have not previously encountered this interstellar ambassador may like to know that he crash-landed in a garage in Los Angeles in 1986. He was named ALF, or Alien Life Form, by the humans who were involved in first contact with him.

The title of the Seti Website was replaced with the words "attention people of Earth..."

Good looks

Officials have dismissed it as an annoying prank, pointing out that the hackers are wide of the mark when it comes to their choice of an extraterrestrial. The problem with the hairy ALF is that he is just too human-looking.

Experts believe that alien life, if it exists, is probably not like us. Indeed, they believe that if evolution was re-run on Earth, it is very unlikely that anything resembling humans - let alone ALF - would emerge a second time.

Not that many Seti scientists would be disappointed in finding something like ALF - they just do not expect it to happen. Project officials said that while they are satisfied with the security of their other servers, they are checking them to be certain.

The SETI@home project, which opened to the public in mid-May, harnesses the downtime computer power of subscribers to sift through data obtained by a radio telescope to look for signals from space.

More than 600,000 people have signed up since the project began.

Internet Links:

The ALF page

Seti@home

Another ALF Page

Relevant Stories:

17 May 99 | Sci/Tech
Screening for alien life

05 Jul 99 | Sci/Tech
Is anybody out there?

23 Mar 99 | Sci/Tech
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