

Protecting Global Intelligence: Why Secure Communications is a Matter of International Urgency



Whether in the public sector or the private enterprise, an organization is only as secure as its weakest link. And increasingly, that weak link is its communications. Savvy cybercriminals know that directly targeting established infrastructure is a fool's game – so instead, they focus on intercepting both messages and data.

It's a scenario that Stephen Komorek, U.S. Operations Director and Senior Special Investigator at Conflict International, knows all too well.

"Despite their widespread use in the business world, platforms like Signal and WhatsApp are not secure," explains Komorek. "Most governments around the world actually have direct access to their backends, to say nothing of bad actors, both state-sponsored and independent. There are multiple layers of risk, ranging from economic theft to corporate espionage to signal intelligence."

"Especially if you're working in the intelligence field, diplomatic field, or corporate security, the threat of espionage is extremely high," he continues. "Most people don't actually realize just how exposed they are. If your organization doesn't have the use of proper, secure communications, you're opening yourself up to both data theft and extreme liability."

Conflict International

Industry:

Security & Investigations

Location:

United States

Product:

BlackBerry® SecuSUITE®

Website:

www.conflictinternational.com

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Knowledge is Power

A worldwide private intelligence, investigative, and security firm, Conflict International maintains contacts in over 90 different countries. It is an agency that prides itself on its solution-oriented approach. The services it provides are varied, including bug sweeps, electronic countermeasures, counterespionage, corporate background checks, surveillance, and hostage negotiation.

For Conflict International, each client represents a unique challenge. And for each challenge, there is a unique solution. Through his work with the agency, Komorek himself has been involved in international criminal investigations, fought against human trafficking, and even proved instrumental in releasing an American citizen facing the death penalty overseas.

“I like to ask my clients first to tell me what’s going on – a lot of people believe they have the solutions they’re looking for and know what they want,” says Komorek. “The problem is that they don’t know what the options are. They don’t understand the legalities, they don’t know what they can or cannot do, and they aren’t fully aware of the risks they face.”

“Once we’ve gotten a feel for a client, we bring in the best industry professionals for their individual situation,” he continues. “Most of them, we have on staff. Those we don’t have on staff, we know where to find them – the best and brightest professionals and the most suitable solutions possible.”

When Anyone Could Be Listening In

As part of their job, Komorek and his colleagues pay close attention to intelligence, espionage, and cybersecurity. And in recent years, they’ve noticed one trend becoming overwhelmingly and concerningly common. Corporate communications are simply no longer secure.

“Signal intelligence capabilities have recently gone through the roof, becoming both more sophisticated and more readily available to bad actors,” says Komorek. “There exists a fast-growing number of intercepts in corporate communications, and the most commonly-used platforms are growing more compromised and less secure. Businesses aren’t keeping pace with this, and criminals are actively targeting them as a result.”

With the push towards distributed work that has been accelerated by COVID-19, digital communications are now a necessary part of most organizations’ day-to-day life. Conflict International is no exception to this. With operations in regions that include Africa, Eastern Europe, and Asia, it maintains vast, interconnected lines of contact.

And these lines of contact must be kept secure, both for the sake of Conflict International’s staff and for its clientele.

“The last thing you want, especially in our industry, is to have either your team or your client’s information compromised,” Komorek explains. “It all boils down to mitigation of damages and risk. To be able to ensure safety for our professionals and peace of mind for our clients.”

Although Conflict International already had a solution for secure communication in place, Komorek and his colleagues were dissatisfied with it. They needed something better. Something more advanced, more intuitive, and more comprehensive.

“We called together a global think tank to evaluate multiple alternatives to our existing secure communication platform,” recalls Komorek. “It was something we discussed on an international level, carefully evaluating what was available to us. That evaluation led us to [BlackBerry® SecuSUITE®](#).”

Shutting Out The Eavesdroppers

A high-security encryption tool certified to meet the highest security requirements, SecuSUITE® allows employees to make secure phone calls and exchange secure messages using off-the-shelf Android™ and iOS® devices. Rather than forcing staff to rely on bulky, inconvenient, and complicated specialized communications systems, SecuSUITE layers itself atop existing communication tools, allowing for an incredible degree of flexibility in deployment.

“When we discovered SecuSUITE, I reached out to BlackBerry and discussed the solution in person,” Komorek elaborates. “Once I got the technical information on the product, using it simply made sense. It offered everything we were looking for – we worked with BlackBerry to deploy it, and even got to beta test some upcoming features.”

Conflict International now uses SecuSUITE not only to help protect privileged information but also to manage and control access levels, protecting the organization against unauthorized access to conversations and communications. The platform’s ease of use allows the agency to quickly swap out field agents as needed, while its prominence in the federal government allows for a great deal of interconnectivity with some of Conflict International’s most important clients. One of the solution’s most valuable features, notes Komorek, is its barcode function.

“Let’s say you have an asset in a foreign country, and you have a team there that needs to work together over comms, but you don’t want to give them tiered access,” Komorek explains. “You can print off a barcode, hand them a phone, scan it, then burn the barcode immediately. Once you’re done, you can delete the code from the system – it makes it easy to bring people up to speed securely, effectively, and efficiently, even across multiple locations.”

“I’m a firm believer in BlackBerry, and in what they do. SecuSUITE is a secure communications tool that’s easy to deploy and use, providing us with security, peace of mind, data protection, and safety. With SecuSUITE, we can ensure that sensitive communication only goes to the people who need to hear it – and doesn’t find its way to unauthorized parties.”

– Stephen Komorek,
*U.S. Operations Director/
Senior Special Investigator,
Conflict International*

Building Better Lines of Contact

“No matter how secure you think your business is, there is always a weak link,” says Komorek. “And if your weak link is communication, know that there are people actively targeting that. If you’re not doing everything you can to secure your business’s communications, then you are exposed.”

“The best, most secure communication is and always will be face-to-face,” Komorek concludes. “But that’s not always feasible, especially for international organizations. SecuSUITE provides us with a solution to that problem – it helps us keep our personnel safely connected and in contact no matter where they may be.”

About BlackBerry

BlackBerry (NYSE: BB; TSX: BB) provides intelligent security software and services to enterprises and governments around the world. The company secures more than 500M endpoints including 150M cars on the road today. Based in Waterloo, Ontario, the company leverages AI and machine learning to deliver innovative solutions in the areas of cybersecurity, safety and data privacy solutions, and is a leader in the areas of endpoint security management, encryption, and embedded systems. BlackBerry’s vision is clear — to secure a connected future you can trust.

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