Issued 6/8/17

Apple Employees Caught Stealing and Selling Users' Personal Data

Apple's name is dragged into another scandal, this time caused by a group of employees who were involved in an underground network in China selling users' personal data. A report from the Hong Kong Free Press and citing a statement from the local police in southern Zhejiang province reveals that investigators detained a total of 22 people following months of investigations, with no less than 20 of them said to be working for Apple.

It appears that the Apple staff used the company's own network to access personal information about customers, including names, phone numbers, and Apple IDs. The data was then stolen and sold by other members of the group for anywhere between $1.5 and $26.50. The aforementioned report adds that the suspects were based in four provinces, namely Guangdong, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Fujian, and a police raid the last weekend at several locations allowed law enforcement to seize computers and evidence that would help in the investigation.

Apple hasn't yet offered a statement on this, but the company is very likely to investigate. Even though Cupertino is famous for not discussing cases that would hurt its image, more clarification is needed in this regard, especially because the nature of the information that got stolen is not entirely clear and customers are afraid that other personal details and financial data might also be compromised. At this point, it's also unclear

whether the impacted customers were only based in China or in other countries as well, though there's a good chance that only information of local users was accessed as Apple might have restricted network access to block connections to systems overseas.

Customers whose data might have been compromised are recommended to contact the company or the local police as the investigation continues even though the online network has already been dismantled.