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Is “Malware of Mass Disruption” the WMD of the Future?

One might wonder why one of the final mainstage presentations at RSA 2018 had “Weapons of Mass Destruction” (WMDs) in its title? When ESET Global Security Evangelist Tony Anscombe finished with his presentation, however, no one was asking that question; instead what emerged was a better understanding of how the evolution of malware has led us to the digital weaponry of today and tomorrow. The central question of Anscombe’s presentation was: Can malware be used as a weapon of mass destruction? He contends that it can and notes that we are at a tipping point where malware evolution has led us to the latest development in cyberweapons; this is what Anscombe coins “Malware of Mass Disruption.” He defines this as the following: Any malware that targets infrastructure and thus could damage or disable services and could potentially cause death or serious bodily injury, Any malware designed to inhibit first responders or emergency response from providing lifesaving treatment, Any malware that targets health care or medical devices and could potentially cause death or serious bodily injury, Any software that is intended to damage or disable medical systems or devices.