

Pokemon Go Security & Safety Risks

SCOPE

All members of the DCANG family should be aware of the dangers presented by the Pokémon Go application (app). This product presents opportunities for malicious intent against the organization and the DCANG family. This Protection Note was compiled from both public and official sources. We researched the implications for dangers to the organization and DCANG family members from a standpoint of criminal targeting for robbery or physical violence, and resulting from information collections to gather information about the organization. We also looked at the potential for accidents and errant suspicious activity reporting.

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KEY FINDINGS

1. The application could potentially be exploited by criminals to target members of the DCANG family both digitally and physically.
2. Use of the app in an unsafe manner has led to accidents globally and could lead to accidents involving DCANG family members as well.
3. This app could be used as an alibi for surveillance and reconnaissance by adversaries.
4. When downloaded improperly, this app can access private phone content.

BACKGROUND / OVERVIEW

The Pokémon Go presents several concerns of safety and security for DCANG personnel. The app is a digital scavenger hunt. Users must travel to actual locations wherein the app tracks their location for them to find a digital character on a map. However, the app has several vulnerabilities that could be used to target the phone's owners. Additionally the app is not aware of restricted areas and may tell users to enter restricted areas.

In Manheim, PA police discovered a person inside a restricted area that entered the site attempting to capture a Pokémon. [1] A number of law enforcement agencies across the world reported similar trespassing incidents. Law enforcement officials report that the game is tying up law enforcement on innocuous trespassing incidents, taking away from their time to deal with real citizen issues. Law enforcement also reported that a number of accidents occurred attributed to the game caused by carelessness in driving and walking. [2]

In O'Fallon, MO police reported that robbers placed a beacon inside the game to draw players to locations where they were robbed. [3]

At ISTS a user's phone turned on without their interaction with the device. This occurred inside of a secure area. Another individual at ISTS reported that their phone uses an app that automatically updates with the same apps as their child's as a parental control. When their child downloaded the app it was also downloaded on the parent's phone. [4] A Pokémon site occurred at the ISTS smoking area. Also Jefferson Barracks Park is the

site of a number of hits resulting in a large number unauthorized people attempting to wonder around the military facilities. [5]

Niantic issued a statement that it is working to fix its access to the phone. The company is working to limit its own access only to basic profile information consisting of User ID and e-mail address. The company reported that it contacted Google and confirmed that no other information has been requested or received by the app. [6] However, at the present time users of the app provide the company with the ability to:

- Read all your e-mail [7]
- Send e-mail as you [7]
- Access and modify your Google Drive contents [7]
- Review your search history [7]
- Access any private photos in Google Photos [7]

Pokémon Go disregards “Do Not Track” signals. Tracking is a necessary part of the game. Having an account on the game is automatic acceptance of tracking. The system uses GPS, and Wi-Fi/cellular triangulation to locate its players. [8] The app not only tracks data but identifies patterns and a list of most visited sites. [9]

The company will share your privately identifiable information with third parties so that they may fix issues that you or your phone reports. [8]

SECURITY & SAFETY RISK

The time-limit on the game greatly enhances the risks because it increases the probability that users are so intent on the game that they may not heed signs warning of restricted areas or facilities. This may result in a traffic control issue at access control points as security must turn these people away. There is also the risk that individuals may intentionally ignore such signs to collect their Pokémon. They may attempt to bypass gates or enter the grounds by another point in the perimeter. These individuals may incidentally place themselves in a dangerous work environment such as a weapons range, maintenance area, or in the middle of a training area where they could inadvertently be injured. Further this may be the initiator for a number of suspicious activity reports that have no malicious intent.

Additionally we worry that adversaries may attempt to use the application as an excuse to enter or loiter near restricted areas. The app would provide them a reasonable alibi to be outside of the restricted area.

We are concerned about every member of the DCANG at the individual level. Distracted driving accounts for more than eight deaths and 1,161 injuries a day in the United States.

[10] Drivers on average summarize what is on their phone screens in about 4.6 seconds. At 55 mph the driver travels the length of a football field without looking at their phone. Viewing this app or any other app or text is unsafe while driving. Members of the DCANG family should be aware that not only is it important that they do not use such an app while driving that they must be cautious of other drivers that may be distracted by such an app. As recently stated its use has been a factor in a number of accidents. We are concerned about the privacy aspect of the app. We assess with low confidence there is potential that hackers of the system could use it as an avenue to enter the accounts of players and collect and monitor their content in Google, as well as track their locations. We worry that such exploitations could be used to gather financial, personally identifying information, potentially embarrassing information and other sensitive personal data that could be used to the individual’s detriment.

DCANG family members should be aware of the potential for criminals to use this app to lure victims to a location. Because the app profiles your movement patterns and tracks you it could allow criminals to target you either personally, or know when you are not home or near a piece of your property they wish to exploit.

Because the app has control over the phone's storage and cameras it could be used as a potential source of massive amounts of information as well as a spying device.

RECOMMENDED PROTECTIVE MEASURES

We highly suggest that DCANG family members do not use the app. Foregoing use of the app eliminates any concern. However, if you decide to use the app we recommend you take the following personal precautions:

First, go to myaccount.google.com and sign in. Under the sign-in and security box you will see a link to connected apps and sites. That page will show you all the apps that are connection to your account as well as what part of your account each can access.

If you see Pokémon Go, click on that and it will open a pop out showing whether or not you've given the app full access. You will see a big blue button that says remove and, if you click on that, you will turn off Pokémon's access to all parts of your account but should not have any impact on your ability to play the game.

Use safe driving practices. Do not observe the app while driving. Do not stop abruptly in the road because your app tells you that you are near a Pokémon.

Do not enter restricted areas looking for Pokémon. It is not a viable defense against a trespassing charge. Before entering a facility or public grounds look around for signs about times of business or access restrictions.

Do not blindly follow the app. Do not go anywhere that you do not feel safe. Avoid the same alleyways and bad parts of towns you avoided yesterday for safety reasons even if the app says Pokémon are in them.

Maintain awareness of your surroundings. Still look both ways when crossing streets. Keep an eye out for people that may seem interested in your activities or following you. As with any activity that takes your attention away from the task at hand, maintain situational awareness. Conduct a hasty risk assessment when entering areas you are not familiar with. This "game" can be an exciting way to pass time, achieve goals, and spend time with family or friends. Be aware of your surroundings and be proactive in your personal protection; your security and your safety may depend on the actions you take while distracted by such an activity.

MANDATED PROTECTIVE MEASURES

1. No DCANG member will download this app on a DCANG provided phone.
2. No player will utilize the app while driving as part of their official duties.
3. All personnel will report suspicious activity as normal even if they encounter the person and the person claims to be in or near a restricted area for purposes of the app. Escort the person off military grounds or call law enforcement as situation and personal feelings of safety dictate.
4. No person will be allowed entry into a DCANG facility or perimeter grounds to play the game.

5. If you have the app on your personal phone keep the phone turned off or on airplane mode when working in restricted areas or talking about official work subjects. Especially do not take this phone into meetings in an active state.

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