Keep it under your hat

by Richard Bray

Securing open source

A joint announcement made by Red Hat Inc. and Oracle Corporation stated that Red Hat Linux Advanced Server would be submitted for independent security testing under Common Criteria at evaluation assurance level 2. This is another important milestone in open source computing's march towards credibility in major government and private sector institutions.

Oracle, the world's biggest enterprise software vendor, and Red Hat, the biggest Linux provider, are aiming at persuading major customers that their enterprise applications will run at least as securely on

Business and government customers want both heightened security and the cost savings of open source computing. High-level evaluation of Red Hat Linux Advanced Server means that integrators and ISV's (Independent Software Vendors) will be able to provide Linux-compatible with independent, third-party certification.

In the United States, the National Security Telecommunications and Information Systems Security Policy (NSTISSP) went into effect in July 2002, requiring independent security evaluations of products intended for use in national security applications.

costs and improved performance. Companies like Credit Suisse First Boston, Merrill Lynch and E-Trade have already implemented major Linux systems in their operations.

In recent years, companies like Sun Microsystems and IBM have made billion-dollar investments in the open source Linux system. Red Hat and IBM have recently announced they are expanding their partnership, while Sun is releasing a new version of Linux for the desktop, aimed at challenging Microsoft's dominance of that market.

Many governments around the world have ordered their IT organizations to look at open source software first, before investigating other alternatives. The kernel, or core, of the Linux system is freely available, while companies like Red Hat and others offer commercial versions with added functionality. ⋏⋏

"…billion dollar investments in the open source Linux…"

the Linux operating system as on Microsoft server software.

Oracle will also submit the latest release of Oracle9i Database on Linux for a formal security evaluation.

Under the banner of "Unbreakable Linux," Oracle wants security certification for Linux to meet what it calls the "…urgent need for global standards to measure security capability and software assurance for secure IT infrastructures."

Even without formal security evaluations, major financial institutions have already started installing Linux-based systems. The latest announcement comes from Reuters, which has released a Linux version of Reuters Market Data System (RMDS) to meet what the company called "intense customer demand."

Six major banks and brokerages began testing the Reuters Linux system in October and, according to Reuters, reported lower

Richard Bray is an Ottawa-based freelance writer specializing in the IT sector. He has been published in magazines and newspapers in Australia, the US and Canada. Before freelancing, he worked as a producer, reporter and senior writer for CBC in Toronto.

lewing@isc.tamu.edu