

Idiom by Lon Yan

無孔不入

ren2 shen2 gong4 fen4

As you are watching television comfortably at your home, the Central Intelligence Agency may be listening in on you. Documents allegedly sourced from the spy agency and released by WikiLeaks said CIA can bypass encryption apps and possibly control your car too!

It said the spooks found weaknesses in hardware and software, kept quiet about them and exploited them to spy on people.

The agency could also be one of the biggest computer bug maker, producing over 1,000 malware systems - viruses, trojans and other software that can infiltrate and take control of personal electronics.

The all-pervasive reach of government surveillance on civilians has been the subject of movies like *Enemy of the State* and TV series *Person of Interest*. These are, of course, fictional works, but one cannot help but feel

a chilling ring of truth in them.

The way the CIA is portrayed in the documents can be called “無孔不入” (*wu2 kong3 bu2 ru4*).

“無” (*wu2*) is “without,” “no,” “孔” (*kong3*) “an aperture,” “an opening,” “a hole,” “不” (*bu2*) “no,” “not” and “入” (*ru4*) “to go into.” Literally, “無孔不入” (*wu2 kong3 bu2 ru4*) is “no hole not get into,” “to get in by every opening.”

The idiom means “to be all-pervasive,” “to seize every opportunity,” “to let no opportunity slip by.” It is used to describe the way people do bad things, like spy agencies using every means available to intrude into people’s lives.

Good influence on everyone should not be described by the idiom. But triads that conduct their illegal activities everywhere can be called “無孔不入” (*wu2 kong3 bu2 ru4*).

Terms containing the character “入” (*ru4*) include:

入口 (*ru4 kou3*) – the entrance; import

入侵 (*ru4 qin1*) – to invade; to intrude

入境 (*ru4 jing4*) – to enter a country

收入 (*shou1 ru4*) – income; revenue