

## Vendor bets on its firewall

BY CARLOS A. SOTO | GCN STAFF

Complete invulnerability to hackers and viruses seems problematic, but Security Systems Pty. Ltd. of Perth, Australia, has entered the firewall market with a hardware product it guarantees to be 100 percent impenetrable.

The company last year presented an open challenge with a prize of USD\$10,000 to charity for anyone who could hack through the firewall at [www.securesystems.com.au](http://www.securesystems.com.au) after filling out an online form. If no contestant won a prize, Secure Systems promised to donate \$1 million to charity.

The hardware firewall, called Silicon Data Vault, connects to the motherboard via an IDE cable and has a large CPU of its own. The chip takes control of its host computer early in the boot process, many BIOS moves before reaching the operating system.

### FAT is safe

At this early stage, it protects the rest of the boot sector, the File Allocation Table, the stored data and all hardware, including the complementary metal-oxide semiconductor chip on the host's motherboard that maintains system parameters.

As soon as a user pushes the power button, a log-in screen appears. After three unsuccessful attempts, the computer shuts down.

A successfully logged-in user sees the hard drives in color-coded clusters.

Silicon Data Vault records all activity throughout the log-in process. Even if the user boots from a floppy, for example, every action is monitored and catalogued.

If, at the c: prompt, the user changes text in the system files or introduces a virus, the firewall chip acknowledges the changes but restores the previous status at reboot.

What happens if a hacker simply removes the Silicon Data Vault chip? Mike Wynne, chief executive officer of Secure Systems, said the computer will stop working.

Silicon Data Vault is designed to protect Microsoft Windows NT networks or standalone 300-MHz or faster Pentium PCs with Windows 9x and at least 64M of RAM and 250M of free storage.