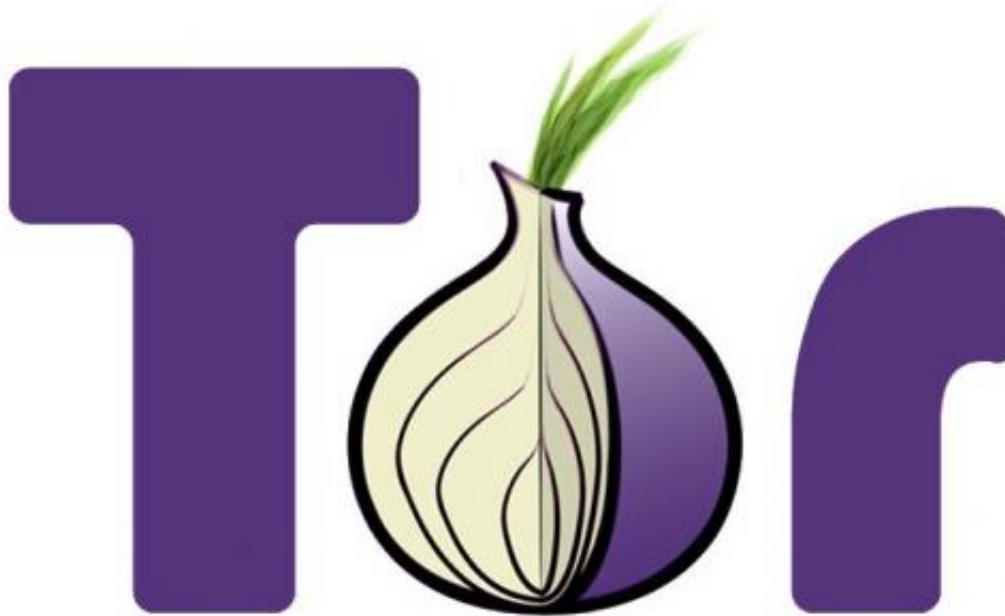# Instant messaging will get Tor treatment in TIMB

March 3 2014, by Nancy Owano

The Tor Foundation which has made it possible for privacy-bent Tor users to anonymously browse the web is now turning to enabling people to autonomously do instant messaging with a Tor-enabled service, dubbed Tor Instant Messaging Bundle (TIMB).

The tool will use Instantbird as its basis. The end result is intended to be a reliable and anonymous instant messaging service that can relay

messages as do mainstream messaging tools but this time leverage Tor's anonymity network. The Tor group plans to get experimental builds out by the end of this month. According to Tor's website notes about the mission, this undertaking is to add secure instant-messaging to the Tor browser bundle, to provide a secure communication tool which supports the free flow of information online.

Tor was originally developed with the U.S. Navy in mind, to protect government communications. Today, many people use Tor. This is an open network that helps people avoid traffic analysis, instead behaving as a network of virtual tunnels for people concerned about privacy on the Internet. "The idea is similar to using a twisty, hard-to-follow route in order to throw off somebody who is tailing you—and then periodically erasing your footprints," according to the Tor project. "Instead of taking a direct route from source to destination, data packets on the Tor network take a random pathway through several relays that cover your tracks so no observer at any single point can tell where the data came from or where it's going." Tor has a staff of developers, researchers, and advocates, and volunteers.

The Tor messenger will be built on the ad-free, open source software messaging service, Instantbird. That service was, in the open source spirit, developed with the view that there ought to be a solid alternative to mainstream instant messaging software. AIM, Yahoo, MSN, Google Talk, Facebook and Twitter are supported; according to that community. Instantbird will work on all computers running Windows, Mac OS X or Linux. Instantbird is available in over a dozen languages, as a result of contributions from translators around the world.

Instantbird's support for multiple languages was only one of the reasons that Tor went for the service. According to Tor project notes, they had mulled over three options, Pidgin/libpurple, xmpp-client and Instantbird.

Based on analyses of the three, "we picked Instantbird because even though it lacks OTR support (which we will work on), it meets all the other goals, including having a clean UI, good protocol support, pure JS implementations, cross-platform bundles, support for multiple languages and also the fact that we can use the in-house Mozilla/XPCOM expertise. We have already integrated Tor Launcher with Instantbird so we can distribute Tor and related components."

More information: instantbird.com/

© 2014 Phys.org

Citation: Instant messaging will get Tor treatment in TIMB (2014, March 3) retrieved 28 April 2024 from https://techxplore.com/news/2014-03-instant-messaging-tor-treatment-timb.html