

Linux-Kernel: Re: Intel also needs convincing on firmware licensing.

Re: Intel also needs convincing on firmware licensing.

Source: <http://linux.derkeiler.com/Mailing-Lists/Kernel/2004-10/8959.html>

From: Gene Heskett (gene.heskett_at_verizon.net)

Date: 10/28/04

To: linux-kernel@vger.kernel.org

Date: Wed, 27 Oct 2004 23:46:12 -0400

On Wednesday 27 October 2004 22:25, Han Boetes wrote:

>Hi,

>

>*The people from the OpenBSD project are currently lobbying to get
> the firmware for Intel wireless chipsets under a license suitable
> for Open Source.*

>

>*Since this will not only benefit BSD but also the Linux Project (and
> even Intel) I would like to mention the URL here for people who want
> to help writing to Intel.*

>

><http://undeadly.org/cgi?action=article&sid=20041027193425>

>

Please be aware that for the so-called "software radios" chips/chipsets, the FCC, and other similar regulating bodies in other countries has made access to the data quite restrictive in an attempt to keep the less ruly among us from putting them on frequencies they aren't authorized to use, or to set the power levels above whats allowed. These restrictions can vary from governing body to governing body so the software is generally supplied according to where the chipset is being shipped. The potential for mischief, and legal/monetary reprecussions is sufficiently great that I have serious doubts that Intel will budge from their current position unless we can prove, beyond any doubt, that the regulatory limitations imposed will not be violated.

Since open source, where anyone who can read the code can see exactly what the limits are, and 'adjust to suit', virtually guarantees miss-use, sooner if not later, for no other reason than its human nature to experiment, Intel/moto/etc therefore has very good reasons to treat its chip<->software interface as highly secret & proprietary.

Thats not saying that they may at some point furnish a 'filter' that presents the rest of the world with a usable API to control it, but

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the filter will see to it that attempted illegal settings are ignored. The only way I can see that actually working is to actually put that filter inside the chip, customized for the locale its being shipped to. The radio control portion of the chip itself wouldn't even be bonded out to external world pins or bga contacts, just the port of the filter that the outside world talks to.

I'd rather doubt they want to make 20 to 40 different filtered versions of the same chipset just to satisfy TPTB in some 3rd world country thats less than 1% of the total sales. Even the relatively dense market where Han lives is probably less than 5% of the total for a popular chipset.

I'm a broadcast engineer who has been dealing at times with the FCC for over 40 years, so you could say I'm biased. But thats not real bias, its just from being fairly familiar with the regulatory territory.

I'd like to see an open source solution to this problem myself, but just because its open source we are asking for, with the attendant liabilities that implies, I would not hold my breath till it happens.

If you do, you'll probably be talking to the rest of the world through a Ouija board.

># *Han*

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Cheers, Gene

"There are four boxes to be used in defense of liberty:
soap, ballot, jury, and ammo. Please use in that order."

-Ed Howdershelt (Author)

99.28% setiathome rank, not too shabby for a WV hillbilly
Yahoo.com attorneys please note, additions to this message
by Gene Heskett are:

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