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Hacking Spree Targets Major Sites; SOPA Called 'Bad for Small Business'

By Nathan Denny on Jan 24, 2012

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"The time has come. An online war has begun between Anonymous, the people, and the government of the United States."

So states a hacker claiming to be part of the group Anonymous in a four-minute-long Youtube video, kicking off a hacking spree that's targeted sites for the U.S. government, the recording industry, major social networking hubs, and more.

SOPA and PIPA

Last week's highly publicized showdown over an anti-online piracy bill seemingly set off the spree, with some of the world's most notorious hacking groups targeting high-profile business, government, and social media sites globally.

Widespread online protest over that anti-piracy bill, called the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA), resulted in last week's 24-hour blackout of sites like Wikipedia and Reddit.

Hand-in-hand with SOPA, which seeks to curb the increasing amounts of online media piracy by U.S. authorities, is the Protect Intellectual Property Act, or PIPA, which seeks to give the government more power over restricting access to sites that don't comply with SOPA's standards.

Ok, so, on the surface, these don't sound like terrible ideas — piracy is bad for business, right? But as we explored yesterday, it's hard to draw the line legally over what kind of media sharing is and isn't legally acceptable. (Read yesterday's story on the high-profile bust of Kim Dotcom here.)

Furthermore, almost the entire Internet has joined forces in opposing the bills, claiming that, if passed, the result would be a disaster for the freedom and variety of the Internet as we now know it.

Bad For Small Business

The Small Business Authority, writing at Forbes, specifically calls these bills "Bad For Small Business."

"The internet has been the great equalizer for entrepreneurs. Small startups can compete with big players on the internet. Government bureaucracy and intervention in the online community would be disastrous not only for small business, but also for the community at large.

"Last week, to display just how drastic the results of SOPA would be, websites like Wikipedia went dark. In protest, for 24 hours, Wikipedia essentially turned itself off and users could not access any free information on the site. This is what would happen to numerous websites if SOPA is passed."

Hack Attack!

The good news is that the White House



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SOPA Is Bad For Small Business

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The Stop Online Piracy Act, or SOPA, would expand the ability to fight online trafficking of copyrighted intellectual property. The Protect Intellectual Property Act, or PIPA, is another measure whose goal is to increase government power to curb access to websites that do not comply with standards. The problem of stealing intellectual property and protecting property on the internet is important in our free markets. Censorship, increased government intervention and interference in our most important growth industry today, technology, would be a disaster. SOPA would make it impossible to advertise or conduct business with any website that infringes on the bill's guidelines. Additionally, SOPA could make it possible to ban internet service providers from hosting websites that do not comply. The goal of protecting property rights from theft needs to be accomplished with different moves from Washington. Enforcing the current existing laws nationally and globally would be the right path. Keeping the SOPA bill how it currently exists would increase government bureaucracy without having the desired effect. Legislation without enforcement is not the answer.

agrees (or says it does, anyway) that SOPA bill is "a little too extreme," with political leaders promising to deal and restructure their attempts to fight online privacy. That's a victory of sorts for online entrepreneurs everywhere.

The bad news is that this focus on piracy has triggered a hacking spree that's focusing on some pretty major sites. The big daddy of these hackers is a "hacktivist" group that calls itself "Anonymous" as a protest over the loss of anonymity caused by the tracking efforts of companies like Google and Facebook.

In the last week, "Anonymous" has successfully hacked OnGuardOnline.gov, the government's online security website, as well as the websites of the U.S. Trade Commission and the U.S. Department of Justice. Government sites in the EU were also attacked, according to [The Wall Street Journal](#).

"In a message on the OnGuardOnline website and on Pastebin, the hackers threatened 'a relentless war against the corporate internet', destroying what it said would be 'dozens upon dozens' of government and company websites, if the Stop Online Privacy Act (SOPA), Protect IP Act (PIPA) and Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) are passed," reports [PC World](#).

Anonymous also threatened "to dump emails, passwords, bank accounts, and other information from the hacked websites."

"We are sitting on hundreds of rooted servers getting ready to drop all your mysql dumps and mail spools," the group said.

Private sites hacked include those of Universal Music and the Recording Industry Association of America. Those attacks were said to be retaliation for the shutting down of the Megaupload file-sharing websites run by Kim Dotcom.

Facebook Next?

Facebook may or may not be the next major target for Anonymous. Parts of the group claim it plans to take down the world's biggest social media site on January 28, 2012. Other members of the group, however, deny the threat.

"Shortly after an individual posting under the Anonymous banner shared a YouTube video promising to target Facebook on Jan. 28, other Anonymous members have said they don't have any intention of targeting the social network," reports [The Washington Post](#).

"Again we must say that we will not attack #Facebook! Again the mass media lie," said a tweet posted to the AnonOps Twitter account, which has reportedly accurately predicted past attacks.

But is it even possible for hackers to take down the social networking juggernaut? The group tried late last year, vowing to "kill" Facebook on Guy Fawkes Day.

That didn't happen, but the reasons why aren't clear.

"While it is true that facebook has at least 60,000 servers, it is still possible to bring it down," said one Anonymous member. "Anonymous needs the help of the people."

Meanwhile, an Israeli hacker has claimed to have stolen 100,000 Facebook logins, which he then posted online. [ZDNet discredits the actual number](#), but there's no doubt that Facebook is under fire from more hackers than just those in the Anonymous group.

What do you think? Are you concerned about compromised data on Facebook or other major sites? Do you think a Facebook shutdown would hurt your business — or is this whole thing likely to blow over with no repercussions? And do you support SOPA or PIPA? Sound off in the comments and share your thoughts with the rest of the Vistage Connect community!

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