

Cyberattacks disrupt internet

LONDON (AP) — Cyberattacks on a key internet firm repeatedly disrupted the availability of popular websites across the United States on Friday, according to analysts and company officials. The White House described the disruption as malicious. Members of a hacker group spread across China and Russia claimed responsibility, although their assertion couldn't be verified.

Manchester, New Hampshire-based Dyn Inc. said its server infrastructure was hit by distributed denial-of-service attacks, which work by overwhelming targeted machines with junk data traffic. The attack had knock-on effects for users trying to access popular websites from across America and even in Europe, affecting sites such as Twitter, Netflix and PayPal.

Broad effects

The level of disruption was difficult to gauge, but Dyn provides internet traffic management and optimization services to some of the biggest names on the web, including Twitter, Netflix and Visa. Critically, Dyn provides domain name services, which translate the human-readable addresses such as "twitter.com" into an online route for browsers and applications.

Steve Grobman, chief technology officer at Intel Security, compared an outage at a domain name services company to tearing up a map or turning off GPS before driving to the department store. "It doesn't matter that the store is fully open or operational if you have no idea how to get there," he said in a telephone interview.

Jason Read, founder of the internet performance monitoring firm CloudHarmony, owned by Gartner Inc., said his company tracked a half-hour-long disruption early Friday in which roughly one in two end users would have found it impossible to access various websites from the East Coast. A second attack later in the day caused disruption to the East and West coasts as well as

impacting some users in Europe.

Read said Dyn provides services to some 6 percent of America's Fortune 500 companies. "It impacted quite a few users," he said of the morning's attack. A full list of affected companies wasn't immediately available, but Twitter, Netflix, PayPal and the coder hangout GitHub said they briefly experienced problems earlier Friday.

Hackers claim responsibility

Members of a shadowy hacker collective that calls itself New World Hackers claimed responsibility for the attack via Twitter. They said they organized networks of connected "zombie" computers that threw a staggering 1.2 terabits per second of data at the Dyn-managed servers.

"We didn't do this to attract federal agents, only test power," two collective members who identified themselves as "Prophet" and "Zain" told an AP reporter via Twitter direct message exchange. They said more than 10 members participated in the attack. It was not immediately possible to verify the claim.

Dyn officials said they did not know who was behind the attacks or if they were orchestrated by a state-backed group or online activists or pranksters. They said they have received no claim of responsibility, but are working with law enforcement.

The collective, @NewWorldHacking on Twitter, has in the past claimed responsibility for similar attacks against sites including ESPNFantasySports.com in September and the BBC on Dec. 31. The attack on the BBC marshalled half the computing power of Friday's onslaught.

The collective has also claimed responsibility for cyberattacks against Islamic State. The two said about 30 people have access to the @NewWorldHacking Twitter account. They said 20 are in Russia and 10 in China. "Prophet" said he is in India. "Zain" said he is in

China. The two claimed to be taking "good actions."

Another collective member the AP previously communicated with via direct message called himself "Ownz" and identified himself as a 19-year-old in London. He told the AP that the group — or at least he — sought through hacking only to expose security vulnerabilities.

The vulnerable internet

For James Norton, the former deputy secretary at the Department of Homeland Security who now teaches on cybersecurity policy at Johns Hopkins University, the incident was an example of how attacks on key junctures in the network can yield massive disruption.

"I think you can see how fragile the internet network actually is," he said.

Dyn said in a series of statements that it first became aware of the attack around 7:00 a.m. local time and that services were restored about two hours later. A little more than two hours later, the company said it was working to mitigate another attack. A Dyn spokesman didn't respond to questions seeking further information about the online onslaught.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security is monitoring the situation, White House spokesman Josh Earnest told reporters Friday. He said he had no information about who may be behind the disruption.

Security experts have recently expressed concern over increasing power of denial-of-service attacks following high-profile electronic assaults against investigative journalist Brian Krebs and French internet service provider OVH.

In a widely shared essay titled "Someone Is Learning How to Take Down the Internet," respected security expert Bruce Schneier said last month that major internet infrastructure companies were seeing a series of worrying denial-of-service attacks.

BRIEFLY

Mid-Columbia Propane opens shop in Hermiston

HERMISTON — Hermiston has a new propane business in town with Mid-Columbia Propane.

The company, located at 81756 N. Highway 395, offers propane, tanks and service calls. The office is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Freddy Enriquez, who owns the business with his wife Lindsey Enriquez, said he and manager Scot Sheerbon have more than 60 years of experience combined in the propane industry. He first started Mid-Columbia Propane in Hood River and said they offer the same competitive pricing and great customer service in Hermiston that they have experience providing in Hood River.

"We are a very service-oriented company," Enriquez said.

He said the Hermiston storefront will be locally owned and operated.

To contact Mid-Columbia Propane, call 541-922-0133.

Safety coalition seeks student safety videos

SALEM — High school students across Oregon can win cash prizes for their creativity in making a video that increases awareness about workplace safety for young workers.

The "Speak up. Work safe." contest accepts submissions that are fun, quirky or serious. The top three entries will receive cash prizes ranging from \$300 to \$500. In addition, students will earn a matching amount for their school.

Students must create a video of 90-second or less that inspires young workers to do at least one thing differently to stay safe on the job. The video must include the theme, "Speak up. Work safe."

Organized by the Oregon Young Employee Safety Coalition, the submission deadline is Wednesday, Feb. 1, 2017. Winners will be unveiled at a screening event in the spring and winning entries will be posted on YouTube.

For more information, including contest details and contact links, visit www.youngemployeesafety.org/contest.

Wheatland Insurance sets food drive

HEPPNER — A canned food drive is underway at Wheatland Insurance in Heppner.

People are invited to donate non-perishable food items during regular business hours through Friday, Dec. 16 at 294 N. Main St., Heppner. Food collected will help local families during the holiday season. It will be distributed through the Neighborhood Center.

The Neighborhood Center, which serves south Morrow County, is located at 441 N. Main St., Heppner. For more information about their services, call 541-676-5024.

Tesla may enter ride ride-hailing business next year

DETROIT (AP) — Electric car maker Tesla Motors has plans to get into the ride-hailing and sharing businesses.

The company hinted at the venture earlier this week when it announced that all of its cars would come equipped with hardware needed to drive themselves.

The company says in a disclaimer that use of self-driving Teslas to make money with ride-hailing or sharing will be allowed only on Tesla's own network. Details will be released next year.

A Tesla spokeswoman wouldn't comment on the matter.

\$47B offer to create world's biggest tobacco company

LONDON (AP) — British American Tobacco has offered to buy out Reynolds American Inc. for \$47 billion in an attempt to gain a strong presence in the U.S., a lucrative market where sales of electronic cigarettes are booming as traditional smoking fades.

The takeover would create the world's largest publicly traded tobacco company and combine BAT's presence in developing countries, where anti-smoking campaigns are

not as strong as in the U.S. and Europe, with Reynolds' almost exclusive focus on the U.S.

BAT already owns 42 percent of Reynolds and sells Dunhill, Rothmans and Lucky Strike cigarettes. Reynolds controls about a third of the U.S. market with brands like Newport, Camel and Pall Mall.

Though smoking in the U.S. is declining, it remains "the largest global profit

pool" outside of China, BAT said in a statement Friday. The U.S. is one of the biggest markets for e-cigarettes.

"BAT and Reynolds American have a strong existing relationship, and while cost savings will be relatively modest, the full access this acquisition would give BAT to the U.S. — a lucrative, consolidated market with high barriers to entry — means it makes eminent sense," Shane MacGuill, head of tobacco at

Euromonitor International, said by e-mail.

The deal is the latest attempted merger in the industry as tobacco companies face weakening demand in developed markets. Only last year, Reynolds American acquired Lorillard, the maker of Newport, the U.S.'s best-selling menthol cigarette brand.

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