

Google says Chinese hackers broke into Gmail

June 1 2011, By MICHAEL LIEDTKE , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- Computer hackers in China broke into the Gmail accounts of several hundred people, including senior U.S. government officials, military personnel and political activists, Google Inc. said Wednesday.

The attacks aren't believed to be tied to a more sophisticated assault originating from China in late 2009 and early last year. That intrusion targeted the Google's own security systems and triggered a high-profile battle with China's Communist government over online censorship, which has made it more difficult for the company to do business in the world's most populous country.

The latest duplicity appeared to rely on so-called "phishing" scams and other underhanded behavior that hackers frequently use to obtain passwords from people and websites that aren't vigilant about protecting the information.

Google credited its own [security measures](#) for detecting and disrupting the intrusions. All the victims have been notified and their [Gmail](#) account secured, according to the company.

Google wouldn't say what parts of the U.S. government were targeted or whether any confidential information may have been contained in the breached Gmail accounts. Besides senior [government](#) officials, other people whose Gmail accounts were violated included Chinese political activists, military personally, journalists and officials in other countries, mainly in South Korea.

Google traced the origin of the attacks to Jinan, China. That's the home city of a vocational school whose computers were linked to the assault more than a year ago on Google's computer systems, along with those of more than 20 other U.S. companies.

That break-in prompted Google to move its Chinese-language search engine from mainland China so it wouldn't have to edit its results to conform with the ruling party's censorship rules. The search engine is now based in Hong Kong, which has less stringent rules.

Before the shift, the tensions escalated amid reports that the [Chinese government](#) escalated amid reports that had at least an indirect hand in the 2009 and 2010 hacking attacks, a possibility that [Google](#) didn't rule out.

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