

Poland defends stance on treaty after web attacks

January 23 2012, By VANESSA GERA , Associated Press

(AP) -- Polish officials vowed Monday to stick to plans to sign an international copyright treaty that has outraged Internet activists and prompted an attack on government websites.

A [government](#) minister, Michal Boni, defended the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement, or ACTA. He said that signing the international treaty would not hamper Internet usage and that Poland will sign it on Thursday, as planned.

"The ACTA agreement in no way changes Polish laws or the rights of Internet users and [Internet usage](#)," Boni, the minister of administration and [digitization](#), said after a meeting with Prime Minister Donald Tusk and Culture Minister Bogdan Zdrojewski.

Internet opponents of ACTA fear it could lead to censorship online.

Monday's developments came after a Twitter account using the name "AnonymousWiki" announced plans on the weekend to attack [government websites](#) to protest the government's support for ACTA. Within hours on Sunday, the websites of the prime minister, parliament and other government offices were unreachable or sluggish, the hallmarks of a denial-of-service attack.

The technique works by directing streams of bogus traffic at a website, jamming it in the same way that a telephone line can be overwhelmed by hundreds of prank calls.

In an initial response Sunday, government spokesman Pawel Gras suggested there hadn't been an attack at all on the sites. "This isn't an attack by hackers, but just the result of huge interest in the sites" of the government offices, he said, a comment that quickly became a source of ridicule on [Facebook](#) and other Internet sites.

By Monday, with the sites still paralyzed, the [prime minister](#) held a meeting to reconsider their stance on the treaty.

"It was a velvet attack by hackers, but still it was an attack. Pawel Gras was wrong," said Slawomir Neumann, a lawmaker with the government Civic Platform party. Neumann said the situation showed that the Polish government is poorly prepared to handle such [attacks](#).

Boni acknowledged in a radio interview Monday morning that the government had failed to hold enough consultations with the public on the matter.

An opposition party, the Democratic Left Alliance, also called on the government to not sign the treaty in a gesture of solidarity with those who warn it could hurt Internet freedom.

Anonymous, the group suspected of involvement in the attacks, made a number of threats before and during the Internet disruptions.

"Dear Polish government, we will continue to disrupt and interfere with your government official websites until the 26th. Do not pass ACTA," one tweet by AnonymousWiki said.

It also threatened more trouble should Poland sign ACTA.

"We have dox files and leaked documentations on many Poland officials, if ACTA is passed, we will release these documents,"

AnonymousWiki said in a separate tweet.

Although its scope is broader, ACTA shares some similarities with the hotly debated Stop Online Piracy Act, which was shelved by U.S. lawmakers last week after Wikipedia and Google blacked out or partially obscured their websites for a day as part of a protest against Web censorship.

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