

Briton accused of hacking Fox, PBS websites

June 14 2012, by SHAYA TAYEFE MOHAJER

(AP) — A 20-year-old Briton suspected of links to the hacking group Lulz Security is accused of cracking into websites for a Fox reality TV show, a venerable news show and other sites, federal prosecutors said Wednesday.

A federal grand jury indicted Ryan Cleary on conspiracy and [hacking](#) charges for allegedly conspiring with other Lulz Security, or LulzSec, members to attack the website for the Fox show "The X-Factor," along with sites belonging to PBS, Sony Pictures and others. Authorities said the hackers were seeking to steal personal information and deface sites.

In a separate case, Cleary faces charges in the United Kingdom on allegations that he and others hacked a law enforcement agency, the Serious Organized Crime Agency, and various British music sites. He was taken into custody in March for breaching his bail conditions in that case, his attorney in that case has said.

The indictment filed Tuesday alleges Cleary and his co-conspirators would identify security vulnerabilities in companies' computer systems and use them as opportunities to gain unauthorized access and, often, cause mayhem.

In one instance, the indictment alleges, Cleary conspired to steal the confidential information of people who registered to get information on auditions for the Fox talent competition "The X-Factor."

That hack was the first to be claimed by LulzSec, an offshoot of the

larger hacking group Anonymous, in tweets about its international hacking spree that began in May 2011.

Later that month, LulzSec claimed to have hacked the website of the Public Broadcasting Service, where a phony news story was posted claiming the dead rapper Tupac Shakur was alive and living in New Zealand.

The post caused a stir on the site for "PBS NewsHour," an award-winning broadcast news show, and came after the network aired a documentary of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange that was deemed critical. PBS' ombudsman at the time defended the program's treatment of Assange as "tough but proper."

The indictment also alleges LulzSec and Cleary hacked into the computer systems of Sony Pictures Entertainment Inc. in June 2011 to steal confidential information of users who had registered on the company's website.

Calls and emails to Fox, Sony and "The NewsHour" seeking comment and confirmation were not immediately returned Wednesday.

Cleary faces a maximum of 25 years if convicted on all charges.

An after-hours call to Cleary's legal representative in London was not returned. It was not immediately clear who would represent him in the United States.

LulzSec also has claimed responsibility for hacking incidents not listed in Cleary's indictment, including hacking the CIA's public-facing website and the Atlanta chapter of an FBI partner organization called InfraGard.

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