

# BlackBerry outage in Europe and Africa

September 21 2012, by Rob Gillies

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In a Thursday June 21, 2012 file photo, Tim Neil, Research In Motion Ltd.'s Canadian Operating Director of Operations, Platforms and Tools, speaks about the Blackberry 10 architecture during the RIM Blackberry 10 Jam World Tour in Toronto. Struggling BlackBerry-maker Research in Motion said Friday, Sept. 21, 2012 it resolved an outage affecting users in Europe, Middle East and Africa that had interrupted service for customers on the very day Apple Inc. unveiled its new iPhone 5. Jefferies analyst Peter Misek said he thinks the transition to the BlackBerry 10 software intended to run their new line of smartphones, could be a cause of the outage. (AP Photo/The Canadian Press, Aaron Vincent Elkaim, File)

(AP)—The chief executive of struggling BlackBerry-maker Research in Motion apologized Friday after an outage in Europe and Africa interrupted service for customers on the very day Apple Inc. released its new iPhone 5.

BlackBerry announced the issues in postings on Facebook and Twitter on Friday, and later said it resolved the issue. The service disruption lasted up to three hours for some BlackBerry users in those regions.

The outage brought up unpleasant memories of last year's troubles with emails and chat messages that left many users bereft for up to three days.

The timing could not have been worse, coming as lines formed outside of Apple stores in a number of cities as the new iPhone 5 went on sale.

RIM shares plunged 6.5 percent, or 45 cents, to \$6.45 in early afternoon trading on the Nasdaq.

Chief Executive Thorsten Heins said up to six percent of RIM's users may have been affected. He said the company is conducting a full analysis and will report back. No reason for the outage was given.

"I want to apologize to those BlackBerry customers in Europe and Africa who experienced an impact in their quality of service earlier this morning. The BlackBerry service is now fully restored and I can report that no data or messages were lost," Heins said in a statement posted on RIM's website. "Preliminary analysis suggests that those customers may have experienced a maximum delay of 3 hours in the delivery and reception of their messages."

RIM initially said the outage included the Middle East, but RIM spokeswoman Amy Jones later said it did not.

"It's the worst timing," Jefferies analyst Peter Misek said. "This is bad publicity and it's very unfortunate. But frankly the attention is all going to be on Apple today, all the weekend —and frankly until the end of the year. Frankly, it's kind of irrelevant. The only thing that's relevant is when they are going to come out with their new phones."

Misek said he thinks the transition to the BlackBerry 10 software intended to run their new line of smartphones, could be a cause of the outage. RIM is preparing to launch the new phones early next year, after a series of delays.

"We think that switch over is causing the difficulties," Misek said.

The latest outage comes as customers are abandoning their BlackBerrys for flashier iPhones and Android phones.

RIM is facing its most difficult period in its history. The Waterloo, Ontario-based company is laying off thousands this year as it transitions to new software platform that has been deemed critical to its survival.

Colin Gillis, an analyst with BGC Financial, called it ironic that an outage would happen that the day Apple is releasing the iPhone 5. Gillis noted that RIM is trying to get its operating centers ready for the new BlackBerrys at the same time that it's laying off thousands and turning over senior management in a time of crisis.

"Systems are going to break when you are in that kind of mode. It's the worst possible environment to try and launch a critical, make or break product," Gillis said.

RIM was once Canada's most valuable company with a market value of more than \$80 billion in June 2008, but the stock has plummeted since, from over \$140 share to less than \$7. RIM's decline is evoking memories of Nortel, another Canadian tech giant, which declared bankruptcy in 2009.

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