

New York Times website still down after hack attack (Update)

August 28 2013

The popular New York Times website remained shut down Wednesday 24 hours after hackers allied with Syria's embattled Assad regime took claim for interrupting the service.

The website nytimes.com, one of the most influential sources of news in the United States, has come up blank for many readers since Tuesday afternoon, though some were still able to access it earlier Wednesday.

Experts called it a complex attack, hitting not only the Times but also parts of Twitter, that demonstrated the talent of the hackers, presumably backed by the Syrian government of President Bashar al-Assad.

"It's a very sophisticated attack," said computer security expert Rob Enderle of the Enderle Group.

The paper acknowledged the continuing problems, saying on Twitter: "If you can't access nytimes.com, we are also publishing at news.nytco.com."

On Tuesday the Syrian Electronic Army (SEA), supporters of Assad who have hacked a number of media websites and their Twitter accounts, claimed responsibility for bringing down the Times website and interrupting the Twitter website as well.

"Media is going down," a message at the shadowy group's Twitter account proclaimed. "Twitter, are you ready?"

The group apparently directed the attack via an Internet domain name registry firm, Melbourne IT, that serves both the Times and Twitter.

The Australian company's own blog had only this message Friday:
"Hacked by SEA, Your servers security is very weak."

Marc Frons, the Times chief information officer, said the outage was "the result of a malicious external attack" and also credited the Syrian Electronic Army, "or someone trying very hard to be them," the Times itself reported.

"Well, at least hackers in Syria think we're still central to American life," snarked Times business reporter Binyamin Applebaum on his Twitter account.

Twitter also pointed to an attack on its domain name registry.

The hack attacks came as the United States geared up for possible military action against Assad's regime as punishment for what Washington says is unquestionable evidence it used chemical weapons against civilians in the country's grinding 29-month war.

The SEA has made itself known in recent months, hacking the Twitter account of The Associated Press to put out a false tweet saying President Barack Obama had been hurt in two explosions at the White House.

SEA has also targeted the Twitter account of the AFP photo service, as well as social media at the BBC, Al-Jazeera and the Financial Times and Guardian newspapers.

On its own website the SEA said it defends the Syrian Arab people from campaigns led by Arab and Western media.

Enderle said the group clearly had strong skills that it was putting on display.

"Attacks by government entities are very well funded and equipped and tend to be damaging," he said.

"They just wanted to give a warning, suggesting they can get into US infrastructure."

© 2013 AFP

Citation: New York Times website still down after hack attack (Update) (2013, August 28)
retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-08-york-website-hack.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--