Israeli defence computer hit in cyber attack

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Hackers attacked Israeli computers including one used by the defence ministry department dealing with civilians in the occupied West Bank, an Israeli data protection expert said on Monday.

"At the beginning of this month a number of mails were sent to a number of companies in Israel, including security organisations," Aviv Raff, chief technology officer at Israeli cyber security firm Seculert told army radio.

"There was an attachment... and whoever opened it was infected with a virus, a Trojan Horse, which allowed the attackers to control those computers. One of the computers belonged to the Civil Adminstration," he said in reference to the defence ministry department, which is staffed by the military.

Asked to comment on the report, the military said in a written statement to AFP: "The reports of the incident are currently being looked into."

Raff did not identify the source of the attack but the radio said it was "apparently from Gaza" and added that 15 Israeli computers were targeted.

It said that only the Civil Administration's public network was affected and that no classified communications were compromised.

Raff said that the virus allowed the attacker "complete control of the infected computers. The attackers could carry out any operation within

that network."

"The moment that we detected it we cancelled the hackers' control and notified the relevant authorities," he added.

Israeli politicians and security officials often warn of the dangers of hacking and say they have thwarted numerous attempted attacks.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told cabinet ministers on Sunday that during his visit to the World Economic Forum in Davos he found extensive interest in Israel's cyber security capabilities.

"It is widely understood that in the information age information must be protected, otherwise there will be chaos; the jungle," he said.

"The assessment is that Israel, due to our special circumstances, could offer various solutions in this area. It is clear that there is a great opportunity and challenge for us here."

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