

Sony's PlayStation, Microsoft's Xbox offline in 'hacker attack' (Update)

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Online gaming networks for Sony's PlayStation and Microsoft's Xbox go dark after coordinated hacking attack

The online gaming networks for Sony's PlayStation and Microsoft's Xbox consoles—hot gifts this Christmas—were disrupted for a second day Friday in what hackers said was a coordinated attack.

The disruption started Christmas Day, PlayStation and Xbox said on

their Twitter feeds, adding that they were working to restore service.

A message posted to the Xbox status page early Friday upgraded service to "limited"—a sign that support teams were making inroads in fixing the problem.

A new Twitter user going by the name "Lizard Squad" took credit for the disruption, claiming it had the "nation on strings."

The name is the same used by a group of hackers that has targeted Sony in the past, though it was not possible to verify the Twitter account's authenticity. The account did not return request for comment and only became active Wednesday.

Sony this month was hit by a sophisticated hacking attack that stole massive amounts of data from its servers. The US has blamed North Korea for the attack, with the reclusive state seen as furious at the release of a Sony movie comedy, "The Interview," which parodies leader Kim Jong-Un.

After initially canceling the December 25 release of "The Interview," Sony backtracked and brought it out in a few US theaters and made it available online—including through the Xbox console and, soon, the PlayStation.

Sony's @PlayStation Twitter account said Friday: "We're aware that some users are having issues logging into PSN - engineers are investigating."

Its @AskPlayStation Twitter account wrote early Friday, a day after the difficulties began: "Our engineers are continuing to work hard to resolve the network issues users have experienced today. Thanks for your continued patience!"

Analysts said a direct connection with the Sony Pictures attack was unlikely, and that the latest hack was probably the work of fame-seeking amateurs.

"The timing suggests that this is an attack that we can put in the category of adolescents who are looking for a bit of glory," said Pierre Samson of the European Circle Security and Information Systems.



A file picture taken in Los Angeles, California on June 10, 2014 shows people testing the new Playstation consoles at the annual E3 video game extravaganza

"There is a very small probability that there was a direct link with the attack on Sony Pictures, you can order an attack to online services fairly easily with few resources."

He said thousands of similar hacks are launched daily, although they are not always effective.

Gamers vent

Meanwhile, Microsoft on a site for its Xbox customers pleaded with its game fans to be patient.

"We're aware of this issue, and we're working to find a fix ASAP! We appreciate your patience in the meantime, and we encourage you to retry signing in when you get a chance. We'll update you as soon as we know more," the message said.

Though a direct connection between "The Interview" and the service disruptions could not be confirmed, some gamers were convinced a link exists.

"I blame that darn movie 'The Interview'," wrote as2009man on a PlayStation community forum message board.

"It's the gift that keeps on giving," he said.

Another poster to the same forum said he was getting fed up with the game world's vulnerability to repeated denial of service (DDoS) attacks.

"A DDos attack is like a semi (truck) driver intentionally jackknifing his rig on a busy interstate and shutting down traffic for a few hours," said one gamer, who wrote under the name "shadoefax."

Game users also took to Twitter to vent their frustration.

"After this christmas, #lizardsquad is forever on the naughty list," one frustrated gamer fumed.

Experts said hackers had warned they might strike on Christmas Day, and that major companies should have been more prepared.

"What is very strange is that Sony and Microsoft are used to this kind of attack, and I don't understand why these big companies don't do more to protect themselves," Jean-François Beuze, president of Sifaris information systems told AFP.

"Maybe they think the government will step in to help them restore the situation and flush out hackers, making an example by catching groups like Lizard Squad."

A major cyber attack on PlayStation in 2011 saw personal details from 77 million customers stolen, preventing customers from playing online and forcing Sony to disable the network for more than three weeks.

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