

Xbox outages, IRS lawsuits, and other year-end drama

December 31 2014, by Matt Day, The Seattle Times

One holiday-shortened week gone, another arrived. Here's a rundown of the Microsoft-flavored news you missed if you had the good fortune to unplug last week:

-The IRS has sued Steve Ballmer and a slate of other current and former Microsoft executives in an effort to get them to testify in a long running tax probe. The agency is looking into how Microsoft treated subsidiaries for tax purposes. Microsoft said it had expected to receive a notice of an increased back tax bill this month. Company lawyers also suggested the subpoenas to executives are part of a campaign to force the company to the negotiating table regarding the taxes it paid between 2004 and 2006.

-Microsoft, along with rival Google, agreed to host streaming video of Sony's "The Interview," after threats of [terrorist attacks](#) spurred some theater chains to pull the film. The online gross for the film's first four days? \$15 million, according to the studio.

-Some gamers hoping to try out new goodies on Christmas were disappointed, as the online arms of both Microsoft's Xbox and Sony's PlayStation went down. A [hacking group](#) took credit for the disruptions. Sony said its outage was indeed the result of a distributed denial of service attack, which essentially floods servers with requests in an effort to bring them down. Microsoft was mum on the cause of Xbox's failure.

-Finally, before the Seahawks battered the St. Louis Rams to clinch the No. 1 seed in the NFL playoffs, I looked at Microsoft's strategy to boost

its relevance to consumers through the lens of its most popular pitchman: Russell Wilson.

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