Merkel website hacked ahead of visit by Ukrainian premier

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German Chancellor Angela Merkel attends the first cabinet meeting of the year at the chancellery in Berlin, Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2015. (AP Photo/Markus Schreiber)

A German official says Chancellor Angela Merkel's website and several other German government sites have been blocked, and a pro-Russian organization has claimed responsibility.

A pro-Russian organization calling itself CyberBerkut claimed on its

website Wednesday to have blocked the official sites of Merkel and the German Parliament ahead of a visit to Berlin by Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk. Merkel has been a leading figure in attempts to calm the Ukraine crisis.

Merkel spokesman Steffen Seibert said several government websites were unreachable Wednesday morning because of a "serious attack clearly caused by a multitude of external systems"—what is known as a distributed denial of service, or DDOS, attack.

Seibert says the attack is still being analyzed, and he did not say who was believed to be responsible.

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