

Philippines probes hacking of poll agency ahead of election

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Philippine authorities are investigating a computer security breach at the state election agency, officials said Tuesday, less than a month before the nation goes to the polls.

The March 27 incident led to certain Commission on Election files being copied by unknown hackers from its website. But the commission said the privacy of the country's 55 million registered voters was not compromised.

Its spokesman James Jimenez said investigators were still checking the potential impact on the May 9 election, which he said will go ahead as scheduled.

At a news conference, he rejected a computer security firm's report that sensitive voter data including fingerprints were leaked.

"The copied data did not include actual biometric records," Jimenez said.

The May polls will elect the successor to President Benigno Aquino. Thousands of other posts are also at stake including vice president, legislators and local executive posts.

The [security firm](#) TrendMicro alleged on its website that the [election commission](#)'s entire database was posted online by a hacker group after another group defaced its website.

"While initial reports have downplayed the impact of the leak, our investigations showed a huge number of sensitive personally identifiable information—including passport information and fingerprint data—were included in the data dump," it added.

Jimenez rejected TrendMicro's report, calling it "irresponsible at best".

He said the hacking was being investigated by government cybercrime experts, while the commission strengthened its defences against hackers.

It has also reprogrammed software used by voters to find the location of their precincts, he said.

In the Easter Sunday attack, the home page of the commission's website was replaced with information about a group named "Anonymous PH", Jimenez said.

A Facebook account by an entity calling itself Lulzsec Philippines later boasted that a copy of the whole database had been made available, he added.

Ronald Agulto, head of the National Bureau of Investigation's cybercrime unit, said the commission has sought help in finding, as well as filing criminal charges against, the hacker or hackers.

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