

Hackers hit Thai sites to protest restrictive internet law

December 19 2016, by Dake Kang And Kaweewit Kaewjinda

Hackers saying they are protesting the passage of a bill restricting internet freedom have been attacking Thai government computer servers, temporarily disabling public access and reportedly copying restricted documents.

A Facebook group called for people to deny access to [government](#) sites by repeatedly reloading them, a simple version of a distributed denial of service, or DDoS, attack. The tactic apparently forced the Defense Ministry website to be temporarily offline Monday. Other reported targets included the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society, the Prime Minister's Office and the Office of the National Security Council.

'blackplans,' a hacker identifying himself on Twitter as part of the informal activist network Anonymous, posted screenshots Friday of what he said were documents taken from government websites in protest.

The new law would allow Thailand authorities to intercept private communication and to censor websites without a court order.

"The bill is very broad and open to interpretation and we will have to see how the government will implement these laws," said Arthit Suriyawongkul of the Thai Netizen Network, which promotes online freedom.

A small public street protest occurred in Bangkok on Sunday.

The bill was approved by the military-appointed legislature in a unanimous vote last Friday despite significant opposition. Critics say the new legislation could be used to silence critics of the military regime, which overthrew a civilian government in 2014.

"This is cyber warfare, which means damages and losses are inevitable," said the Facebook group that urged Monday's attacks, Citizens Against Single Gateway. "This (internet bill) vote was like a coup against the online world and these are the counter measures against that coup."

Activists are also concerned about plans for a single gateway through which all international internet traffic would pass. The government claims such a system is necessary for [national security](#), but opposition from many sectors has made the government evasive about whether it plans to implement a single gateway.

"We are concerned by amendments to Thai legislation that could threaten online freedoms, and call on the Government to ensure the country's cyber laws comply to international human rights standards," said the U.N. Office of Human Rights in a statement Monday.

Thailand's [defense ministry](#) said the DDoS attacks accomplished little.

"They couldn't do anything because we have defense systems in place that are ready for such situations," said Kongcheep Tantrawanich, a Defense Ministry spokesman. He warned against further attacks, saying that "destroying financial systems, banks, transportation systems, and airports, can cause damage toward the population of an entire country."

The government asked members of the public to submit photos and other information about the hackers, whom they called "thugs" who were "overstepping boundaries" and "creating chaos."

But the group posted that they can "manage under any circumstances" and told followers to keep up the attacks.

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