

Qatar says state news agency hacked

May 24 2017, by David Harding



The Qatari Government Communications office said the Qatar News Agency website published a false statement attributed to the country's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, seen in 2016, through a hack

Qatar said Wednesday its official state news agency was hacked and subsequently carried a "false statement" on sensitive regional topics attributed to the country's Emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani.

Amid an apparent wide-scale security breach it was also reported that the agency's official Twitter account had also been attacked.

Among the issues allegedly addressed by the Qatari ruler in the statement were the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, strategic relations with Iran, and comments about Hamas.

There were also alleged negative remarks about Qatar's relationship with the new administration of US President Donald Trump.

Amid the confusion, Doha said the statement which had appeared on its website and was attributed to the country's ruler was completely untrue.

"The Qatar News Agency website has been hacked by an unknown entity," reported the Government Communications Office in a statement.

"A false statement attributed to His Highness has been published."

The communications office added that an investigation would be launched into the security breach.

The "false statement" posted online claimed the emir spoke on Tuesday, two days after the Qatari leader and Trump met in Saudi Arabia as part of the president's recent visit to the Middle East.

The remarks on QNA were picked up and reported by broadcasters in the region, including some in the United Arab Emirates.

They also caused a stir on social media in the Gulf, before Doha scrambled in the early hours of Wednesday morning to deny the claims.

Doha-based broadcaster Al Jazeera also reported that the QNA Twitter account had been hacked and "fake" reports that Qatar was withdrawing ambassadors from several countries in the region were subsequently denied.

The communications office added that the "State of Qatar will hold all those" who committed the breach accountable.

The attack on Qatar's official news agency comes just days after Doha claimed it had been the victim of an orchestrated smear campaign over its alleged "support" for terrorism.

Last weekend, Doha's communications office released an official statement claiming the gas-rich emirate was being attacked by anti-Qatar organisations.

Doha has faced criticism in some quarters for its support of rebel groups fighting Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

In recent weeks, Qatar has been accused outright of terror funding in articles which have appeared in the American media.

Qatar is also home to the former leader of Hamas, Khaled Meshaal, who earlier this month used his Doha base, where he has lived in exile for several years, to launch a new policy document.

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