

ALMA observatory in Chile targeted by cyberattack

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The ALMA space telescope in Chile has been the target of a cyberattack.

The ALMA space telescope in the Chilean Andes suffered a cyberattack over the weekend that has downed its website and suspended its work, the observatory announced Wednesday.

ALMA, the world's most powerful telescope for observing molecular gas and dust, studies the building blocks of stars, [planetary systems](#), galaxies and life itself, according to the European Southern Observatory (ESO), its co-operator.

The attack Saturday on ALMA's [computer systems](#) did not compromise its powerful antennas or any [scientific data](#), it said on Twitter.

The cyberattack forced the suspension of astronomical observations, left the observatory with limited email services, and its website still offline four days later.

"The threat has been contained and our specialists are working hard to restore affected systems," said the ALMA tweet.

"Given the nature of the episode, it is not yet possible to estimate a date for a return to regular activities," it added.

The ALMA telescope boasts 66 high-precision antennas spread over distances of up to 16 kilometers (10 miles) that allow it to detect distant galaxies forming at the edge of the observable universe, according to the ESO.

It is built in one of the driest places on earth, in the Atacama desert, more than 5,000 meters above sea level.

In April, ALMA helped find the most distant galaxy candidate observed to date—some 13.5 billion light-years from Earth.

ALMA employs some 300 experts—40 of them engineers and computer technicians in charge of its powerful computers, servers, data storage systems and screens.

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