

Hacker linked to Anonymous gets 10-year sentence

15 November 2013



This handout obtained March 6, 2012 courtesy of the Chicago Police Department shows Jeremy Hammond

A computer programmer linked to the online hacktivist group Anonymous who pleaded guilty to hacking the intelligence firm Stratfor was sentenced Friday to 10 years in prison, prosecutors said.

Jeremy Hammond, whose case has been supported by digital rights activists and others, also was part of a group which broke into the FBI computer network and later delivered documents to WikiLeaks, according to investigators.

He was sentenced by a US federal judge in New York after pleading guilty in May to conspiracy charges in connection with the 2011 hack of Stratfor, the US attorney's office said.

"As he admitted through his plea of guilty, Jeremy Hammond launched a series of computer hacks that stole confidential information pertaining to companies, law enforcement agencies, and thousands of innocent individuals," US Attorney Preet Bharara said in a statement.

"His sentence underscores that computer hacking is a serious offense with damaging consequences for victims, and this office is committed to punishing the perpetrators of such crimes."

Officials said Hammond and his co-conspirators stole confidential information, including Stratfor employees' emails as well as account information for approximately 860,000 Stratfor subscribers or clients.

Officials also say the group stole credit card information from 60,000 credit card users and used that to make more than \$700,000 in unauthorized charges.

His supporters claimed he was exposing wrongdoing, some comparing him to Chelsea Manning, the US army private prosecuted for giving some 700,000 classified diplomatic and military documents to WikiLeaks.

The "Free Jeremy" website claims Hammond was prosecuted for "leaking information... which revealed that Stratfor had been spying on human rights activists at the behest of corporations and the US government."

The Electronic Frontier Foundation argued in a brief that Hammond "did not profit financially as a result of his actions, but rather, exposed uncomfortable truths."

Hammond read a statement in court claiming his acts were "civil disobedience," according to the text released by his supporters.

"The acts of civil disobedience and direct action that I am being sentenced for today are in line with the principles of community and equality that have guided my life," the statement said.

"I hacked into dozens of high profile corporations and government institutions, understanding very

clearly that what I was doing was against the law, and that my actions could land me back in federal prison. But I felt that I had an obligation to use my skills to expose and confront injustice—and to bring the truth to light."

Hammond added that "I have tried everything from voting petitions to peaceful protest and have found that those in power do not want the truth to be exposed... We are confronting a power structure that does not respect its own system of checks and balances, never mind the rights of its own citizens or the international community."

Hammond was among five people indicted in 2012 alleged to be members of Anonymous, Lulz Security and other international hacking groups.

The indictments cover some of the most notorious hacking incidents of the past several years including those against Sony Pictures Entertainment, Stratfor and computer security firm HBGary.

Hammond, who could have faced a longer prison sentence before his "non-cooperating plea agreement," admitted his involvement in computer intrusions into the FBI Virtual Academy, the Arizona Department of Public Safety and other government networks.

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APA citation: Hacker linked to Anonymous gets 10-year sentence (2013, November 15) retrieved 28 November 2022 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-11-chicago-prison-ny-cyberattacks-case.html>

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