

Hacker attacks gambling websites, demands Bitcoin ransom

7 July 2015, by Wayne Parry



This Jan. 31, 2014 photo shows a game of Texas Hold 'Em under way on a computer screen in Atlantic City, N.J. New Jersey gambling regulators said on Tuesday, July 7, 2015 that a hacker briefly shut down four Internet gambling sites in the state last week, demanding a ransom payment in the Bitcoin online currency. No ransom was paid, and no player accounts were breached, authorities said. (AP Photo/Wayne Parry)

A hacker shut down four New Jersey Internet gambling sites for half an hour last week and threatened more cyberattacks over the holiday weekend unless a ransom was paid using the online currency Bitcoin, authorities said Tuesday.

David Rebutck, director of the New Jersey Gaming Enforcement Division, said Thursday's attack was a so-called distributed denial of service attack, in which websites were flooded with information and requests for access that rendered them inoperative.

"The attack was followed by the threat of a more powerful and sustained attack to be initiated 24 hours later unless a Bitcoin ransom was paid," Rebutck said. "This follow-up attack had the potential to not only negatively impact the targeted casinos, but also all business in Atlantic City" that share the same Internet service provider.

No ransom was paid. Rebutck said due to a response by law enforcement and casino staff, "the threat was mitigated with no significant disruption to service. All involved remain on heightened alert but are relieved that the holiday weekend has passed without incident. "

Rebutck did not identify the sites that were affected nor the size of the ransom sought. But he said numerous local and state law enforcement agencies are investigating.

Bitcoin is a virtual currency that, in addition to its legitimate uses, also has proven popular with online criminals.

No player money was stolen and no personal information was compromised in the incident.



This Jan. 20, 2014 photo shows a game of Internet blackjack under way on a computer screen in Atlantic City, N.J. New Jersey gambling regulators said on Tuesday, July 7, 2015 that a hacker briefly shut down four Internet gambling sites in the state last week, demanding a ransom payment in the Bitcoin online currency. No ransom was paid, and no player accounts were breached, authorities said. (AP Photo/Wayne Parry)

New Jersey began Internet gambling in November 2013, and is one of three states in the nation that permit it, along with Nevada and Delaware.

It got off to a slower than expected start here but has shown signs of growth in recent months. New Jersey casinos won \$122 million from Internet customers in 2014, its first full year of operation.

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