

Two men arrested, charged with hacking senior US officials

8 September 2016, by Matthew Barakat

Two North Carolina men were arrested Thursday and charged in connection with a computer hacker network that allegedly targeted CIA Director John Brennan and other senior government officials.

Federal prosecutors in Alexandria said Andrew Otto Boggs, 22, known online as "INCURSIO," of North Wilkesboro, North Carolina, and Justin Gray Liverman, 24, also known as "D3F4ULT," of Morehead City, North Carolina, were charged and will make initial appearances next week.

Prosecutors say Boggs and Liverman were members of a hacking group called "Crackas With Attitude." Beginning in October, the hackers gained access to personal online accounts of senior U.S. government officials. The officials are not identified in a 37-page affidavit.

Earlier this year, British authorities arrested a 16-year-old boy who they said used the name "Cracka" to target Brennan and others. Indeed, the affidavit states that three British teens, ranging in age from 15 to 17, are members of the conspiracy.

The affidavit cites email exchanges in which Boggs tells another individual, "I want to carry on (Cracka's) legacy if or when he is arrested. I know he'll receive a harsh sentence because our government doesn't like being embarrassed."

According to the affidavit, Boggs and Liverman lived in their respective parents' homes. They used the hacked accounts to send harassing messages to their victims.

While Brennan is not named in the affidavit, he appears to be "Victim 1." The affidavit states that Victim 1's emails were released by WikiLeaks on Oct. 21, 2015, which corresponds with a WikiLeaks disclosure pertaining to Brennan.

The leaked emails included a memo addressed to President Obama in 2009 advising him to tone

down rhetoric against Iran.

In one exchange, Boggs tells "Cracka" that he wants to hack Victim 1's agency because "I've been looking for evidence of aliens," according to the affidavit.

When the hackers would gain control of an account, they would use access to promote the Free Palestine Movement, according to the affidavit. In another case, they pretended to be Edward Snowden when they contacted their victim.

News accounts indicate that the Crackas hackers targeted Director of National Intelligence James Clapper and had his phones forwarded to the Free Palestine Movement. The affidavit includes online conversations among the hackers discussing such a plan, but the victim is not identified.

In all, the affidavit refers to five victims—four who were government officials or family members, and one who was a corporate CEO.

Authorities also accuse the hackers of calling in a false bomb threat to the Palm Beach County Sheriff's office in Florida earlier this year. The hackers are also accused of publishing the names and emails of thousands of employees at the FBI and Department of Homeland Security and about 80 Miami-area law enforcement officers.

Online court records do not list attorneys for Boggs or Liverman. Calls to numbers listed for the Boggs and Liverman families Thursday went unanswered.

A CIA spokeswoman declined comment because the criminal case is ongoing.

In October, when WikiLeaks published the hacked emails, the CIA issued a statement describing the Brennan family as victims. "This attack is something that could happen to anyone and should be condemned, not promoted," the agency said.

© 2016 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

APA citation: Two men arrested, charged with hacking senior US officials (2016, September 8) retrieved 21 January 2021 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-09-men-hacking-senior.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.