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Sony partially blames online vigilante group Anonymous for data breach

May 4, 2011 | 3:34 pm



Sony told U.S. lawmakers that the Internet vigilante group Anonymous indirectly allowed a network attack that exposed the personal data of millions of customers.

In a letter to the House Energy and Commerce Committee's panel on commerce, manufacturing and trade, Sony said that it discovered a file planted on one of its servers named "Anonymous" with the words "We are Legion," the tagline for the group that has brought down the websites of big corporations such as Visa, the letter said.

Sony's network may have been breached while it was defending itself against a denial-of-service attack from Anonymous, Sony said. The online activists were protesting a civil suit Sony brought in federal court in San Francisco against a hacker.

"Whether those who participated in the denial-of-service attacks were conspirators or whether they were simply duped into providing cover for a very clever thief, we may never know," the letter said.

"Sony has been the victim of a very carefully planned, very professional, highly sophisticated criminal cyber attack designed to steal personal and credit card information for illegal purposes," the letter said. Sony said the company earned of the first breach on April 19 and shut down the PlayStation Network the following day. The company informed account holders that their personal data was potentially exposed about a week later.

In response, Anonymous released a statement Wednesday denying the allegations, but did allow that individual members may have been involved.

"Sony is incompetent," the group said. "While it could be the case that other Anons have acted by themselves AnonOps was not related to this incident and takes no responsibility."

Also on Wednesday, U.S. Atty. Gen. Eric Holder told the Senate Judiciary Committee that the Justice Department had opened an investigation into "those hacking situations that have gotten publicity over the last few weeks, the Sony incident among them."

New York Atty. Gen. Eric Schneiderman on Wednesday subpoenaed three Sony divisions -- Sony Computer Entertainment, Sony Network Entertainment and Sony Online Entertainment -- for documents regarding their security, CNBC reported.

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-- Shan Li

Photo: A customer watches a monitor of Sony's PlayStation 3 at a Tokyo electrical shop April 27. Credit: Yoshikazu Tsuno / AFP / Reuters

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Randy Hagan

Can't disagree more with Shayne. If you're entrusted to protect something, it's entirely your responsibility to protect it. You can't beg off and push your failure on someone else.

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Its funny how The Sony Paystation company is not accepting responsibility for customers information being stolen.

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Shayne Jones · Bakersfield, California

probably because it isnt. if youre entrusted with guarding something, and someone else who obviously outmatches you manages to steal it, its the fault of the thief. you cant seriously try and defend a thief.

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Tracy Robertson

Then I guess the 9/11 attack on the united states was the fault of the Navy Seals. I guess we wasted a 29 bullet on the cowering imp who was usama bin laden. Since it is ultimately the fault of those protecting us, Randy lets blame the Navy Seals for 9/11. I'm glad we allowed them a chance to redeem themselves though. Or else they would have to stand trial. This isnt the same as blaming ones alcoholic behavior or homosexual tendencies on your parents. Someone committed a crime and I don't believe it was Sony. Just saying.....

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Josh Tellez · Top Commenter · Hacienda Heights, California

Many people tend to think that credit card or person data on file is safeguarded. Unfortunately IT CAN BE hacked. No one and nothing is safe. Welcome to the digital world.

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