Written by **Alex Newman** on February 3, 2011

Hackers Shut Down Egyptian Regime's Websites

A loosely affiliated network of hackers around the world known as "Anonymous" took credit for shutting down the Egyptian regime's websites in support of anti-government protestors. The group is also targeting other tyrants in the region.

Last week, the Egyptian security apparatus cut off Internet access and even cell-phone service across the country in response to protests that have rocked the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Hosni Mubarak. Many of the demonstrations were actually orchestrated using social-networking services like Facebook and Twitter.

In response, the group of hackers had been helping protestors circumvent the recently lifted web blackout. When service was restored, Anonymous began "Operation Egypt." It went after the web portals of the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, and even the "president's" National Democratic Party site. And it succeeded. All of the regime's targeted sites, including the cabinet's, remained down on Thursday.

"Internet in Egypt is up. Why isn't Mubarak's site? Because we do not forgive, We do not forget," the hacker group wrote in a message posted Wednesday on Twitter. "Egyptians, Hang in there, we are with you."

In another message released five minutes prior, the group welcomed the nation back online and boasted of its success. "Welcome back to the Internet, Egypt. Well, except http://www.moiegypt.gov.eg — you stay down," Anonymous wrote.

The group then called for the tyrant to step down. "http://www.moiegypt.gov.eg/ is down. http://www.ndp.org.eg/ is down. Mr. Mubarak, when will you follow?" it wondered, followed by a suggestion that the dictator was seeking a domestic war.

"We get it now. You want a full sized civil war to suit your ego," Anonymous said. "It's called 'Scorched Earth', Mr. Mubarak. Just step down, not so hard." It warned that Mubarak would lose. "This was clear from the start."

Thus far, Mubarak has agreed not to run for re-election. But protestors are demanding that he step down immediately, with some calling for him to be tried and executed.

An unofficial spokesman for the hacker network told the *New York Times* that the efforts were part of a wider campaign to support protests that have rocked the Middle East and North Africa in recent weeks. In January, for example, Anonymous members shut down the Tunisian dictatorship's sites, as well as the stock market there. The tyrant fled the country.

"We want freedom," the Anonymous spokesman said. "It's as simple as that. We're sick of oppressive governments encroaching on people."

The hacker network burst into the spotlight in recent months when it attacked a series of payment-processing giants including PayPal and MasterCard. Those companies and others cut off financial ties to whistle-blowing organization WikiLeaks under pressure from the U.S. government, which the group said was unacceptable.

The spokesman also told the *Times* that, while he personally did not condone illegal activity, recent arrests of Anonymous members around the world in connection with past attacks would not affect future operations. Other Arab governments are already in the crosshairs.

The "hacktivists," as they're being dubbed in the media, are targeting the Yemeni dictatorship's websites as well, for example. So far U.S. officials have not commented on the hackers' most recent attacks, though last week the U.S. government urged the Egyptian tyrant to re-activate the web.

Meanwhile, the Obama regime and its allies in Congress are hoping to authorize what critics are calling an Internet "kill switch." It would allow the federal government to shut down the Internet, or at least parts of it, for up to 120 days in the event of a cyber crisis. An extension would have to be granted by Congress.

But judging from the initial outrage, it appears that government efforts and proposals to further control or even shut down the Internet will face intense opposition. A popular image circulating widely throughout the web features a mustached Egyptian sarcophagus face with the words: "If your government shuts down the Internet, shut down your government."

The group Anonymous uses what's referred to as a distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attack to target websites. It essentially works by sending a flood of fake requests for data to the server in question. That disables the flow of information to regular users due to the enormous volume of phony requests.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation has executed a number of search warrants throughout the U.S. in connection with the group. In Europe, a number of hackers were also detained. Some of those arrested, however, have already been released. And according to the group's spokesman, they participated in the ongoing attacks against Arab regimes, too.

Graphic: Website of the Egyptian Ministry of Information

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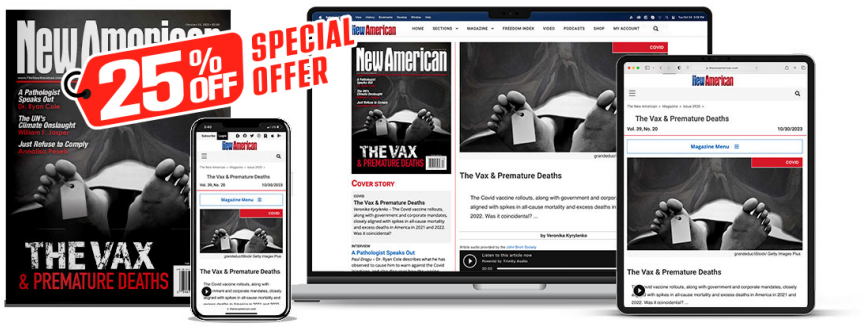

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