



Would “The Interview” Really Provoke a North Korean Terror Attack?

Sony Pictures Entertainment has canceled plans to release *The Interview* after the five largest theater chains in the United States and several smaller chains refused to show the film. AMC Entertainment, Carmike Cinemas, Cinemark, Cineplex Entertainment, and Regal Entertainment — along with a host of smaller chains — all announced they would not be screening the film due to a terrorist threat issued by the hacktivist group calling itself Guardians of Peace.



The sophisticated cyber-attack against Sony Pictures Entertainment late last month has left the media giant scrambling as the stolen data — which includes e-mails, employee files, financial records, documents detailing upcoming projects, and several unreleased movies — has been dumped onto the Internet for the world to see. The besieged entertainment company has suffered untold financial loss and embarrassment. And possible legal problems are now on the horizon, since some employees are launching lawsuits claiming that Sony failed to secure personnel files despite knowing that the files — which include personal information about employees — were at risk.

The hackers seem intent on continuing their assault until Sony Pictures Entertainment is ruined. At this rate, they seem to have a pretty good chance of succeeding.

On Tuesday, Guardians of Peace issued a threat to theaters that would show *The Interview* and patrons who would go to see it. The threat made references to 9/11 and frightened theater owners sufficiently to cause them to refuse showing the film. The message, which was posted on Internet bulletin boards, said:

Warning

We will clearly show it to you at the very time and places “The Interview” be shown, including the premiere, how bitter fate those who seek fun in terror should be doomed to.

Soon all the world will see what an awful movie Sony Pictures Entertainment has made.

The world will be full of fear.

Remember the 11th of September 2001.

We recommend you to keep yourself distant from the places at that time.

(If your house is nearby, you’d better leave.)

Whatever comes in the coming days is called by the greed of Sony Pictures Entertainment.

All the world will denounce the SONY.

More to come...

Theaters worried that the threat would not only cause patrons to avoid seeing *The Interview*, but would also cause them to avoid going to any theater showing the controversial film. The holidays are an important season for the film industry, with movie companies planning releases of films to coincide with



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Christmas. A low turnout of theater-goers could cause other films to be slow coming out of the gate and cause theaters and film companies to suffer. The major chains, with so much to lose, concluded they had no choice but to jettison the film from their lineup.

Sony Pictures Entertainment responded by announcing it will not release the film at Christmas and that there are no plans at this time to release it in the future. It is possible that the film will be released later, either as an On Demand cable release or direct to DVD. Many viewers who may originally have had little or no interest in seeing *The Interview* may now not be able to resist seeing the film that North Korea is accused of moving heaven and earth to stop.

Sony Pictures Entertainment has held to the theory that North Korea is behind the cyber-attack and subsequent leaking of data. The terrorist threat seems to add credibility to that theory. Other evidence, though, seems to indicate that the cyber-attack was the work of a mysterious hacker group, and not North Korea.

The group known as Guardians of Peace initially attempted to extort money from Sony Pictures Entertainment, threatening to release the stolen data only if the entertainment company did not meet its demands. At the time, Sony may have underestimated the group's ability to carry out this threat or have believed the group would release the data regardless of payment. At any rate, the hackers did not make any mention of *The Interview* in their demands or in their early statements to media or on the Internet. Only after news media speculated that North Korea was responsible (and retaliation against the movie the rationale) did Guardians of Peace even mention the movie. That statement denied that North Korea was responsible for the hacking or that it was about the movie, but did say the movie was part of the problem with Sony Pictures Entertainment. Here is that statement as reported by [csoonline](#):

We are an international organization including famous figures in the politics and society from several nations such as United States, United Kingdom and France. We are not under direction of any state.

Our aim is not at the film *The Interview* as Sony Pictures suggests. But it is widely reported as if our activity is related to *The Interview*. This shows how dangerous film *The Interview* is. *The Interview* is very dangerous enough to cause a massive hack attack. Sony Pictures produced the film harming the regional peace and security and violating human rights for money.

The news with *The Interview* fully acquaints us with the crimes of Sony Pictures. Like this, their activity is contrary to our philosophy. We struggle to fight against such greed of Sony Pictures.

In other communications with media and in on-line posts, the group has denied either being allied with North Korea or that it was motivated by *The Interview*. The Department of Homeland Security said Tuesday that "there is no credible intelligence to indicate an active plot against movie theaters within the United States." So it appears that the threat is just the hackers capitalizing on their notoriety. Further evidence of this is found in the fact that the Los Angeles premier of the movie went off without a hitch. The New York premier — which had not been held yet at the time the threat was issued — was canceled.

The big question that has not been answered by those claiming that North Korea is behind the cyber-attack on Sony Pictures Entertainment is why North Korea would go to all this trouble to stop this particular film. After all, in the recent past, there have been other movies that have cast North Korea in a very negative light and fed the perception that the totalitarian regime significantly threatens U.S. national security.



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In 2012 the MGM/United Artists remake of the 1984 film *Red Dawn* was released. The film originally cast China as the enemy that invades the United States and is then met with resistance by a brave band of American insurgents comprised mostly of teenagers. However, in the post-production work, the enemy was changed to North Korea. The reason behind the decision was to keep the film open to the Chinese market.

In 2013 Millennium Films released *Olympus Has Fallen*, another film about a North Korean invasion of the United States. This time, though, it is a surgical strike on the White House involving hackers and crack military special forces. Their objective is to seize control of U.S. nuclear sites and cause all the missiles to self-destruct in their silos, leaving much of America a desolate graveyard.

Of course, when the *Red Dawn* remake and *Olympus Has Fallen* were made and then shown at theaters, North Korea did not respond by attacking any of the studios, production companies, theater companies, or anyone else involved in making or showing them.

Russia has recently been shown to have hacked the [White House](#) and [other American government and industry computers](#) to try to give themselves a military advantage over the United States in the event of a conflict. The notion that North Korea would focus its hacking efforts on bringing down one film company that offended them sounds like plot for a movie, not reality. Maybe Seth Rogen could make the movie.

Photo: Detail from The Interview movie poster



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