



ANONYMOUS HACKER GROUP

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Dr. Bryan Reagan.

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Patrick Cutter, Brian Lopez, Luis Cardenas, Ahmad Sanders

The hacker group, known as Anonymous, is a group of global computer hackers that was formed around 2003. No one really knows the exact date the organization was formed but they started taking credit for various hacks and DDoS attacks (distributed denial of service attacks bombards the target websites with data until they cannot respond, rendering them temporarily inaccessible). In this paper, we will go over everything that pertains to them from their name, to the members, what attacks they have done, public opinion and much more.

The group has about 1,000 members (1.5million followers on Twitter), most of them teenagers, but people associating themselves with Anonymous run the gamut. Members include women, men, Democrats, Republicans, the young, the old, and people of different races and nationalities. When appearing in web videos, members have disguised themselves with Guy Fawkes masks popularized by the book and film "V for Vendetta." Their goal is simple, or so they say, to preserve free speech and the openness of the internet. "The story of Anonymous starts on 4chan, an enormously popular site for sharing images and talking about them. In particular, the group rose up out of 4chan's /b/ board, the one reserved for "random" discussions. On /b/, posts have no named authors, and nothing is ever archived. To be noticed, you must be as shocking as possible, and with the notable exception of child porn, anything goes. "/b/tards," as denizens of the board call themselves, create incest porn and fantasize about beating women even as they also discuss data visualization strategies and trade coding tips. Nearly any appetite is acceptable, and nearly any weakness, technical or human, is exploited." (Wired) This is disturbing, but if you have ever gone deep enough into the internet you know that it gets much worse.

The attacks and hacking anonymous has done, or at least taken credit for, are quite astonishing. They started off very small just hacking and deleting various articles and websites

that challenged them and challenged the idea of free speech and an open internet. One frequent prank was D0xing, which involves posting the personal information (usually in the form of digital documents, hence "D0x") of the target as publicly and in as many places as possible. Other common raids were mostly just puerile fun: ordering pizzas on someone's behalf, say, or signing them up for stupid junk mail. The infamous Rickroll—duping a victim into watching a video of Rick Astley—began as a tool of the /b/tard/ raid before spreading so far into the culture that even US representative Nancy Pelosi, while speaker of the house, used the prank in an official video. The group has attacked many firms and countries. Some, but not all, include Church of Scientology, the governments of Australia, Egypt, Iran and Zimbabwe, the anti-gay Westboro Baptist Church, and MasterCard, PayPal and other financial companies. In the beginning, the group just wanted to laugh and have fun over the internet. In 2008 the Church of Scientology challenged their laughter and that pushed Anonymous into a political direction. “In January 2008, a video leaked out of the Church of Scientology. In it, over the thrum of an action-movie-style soundtrack, Tom Cruise enthused about his total devotion to the doctrines of Scientology. The video flew around the Internet, spawning parodies and commentary. It was epically lulzy, in just the sort of way that made perfect fodder for /b/. But the legendarily litigious church acted to stop the spread of the video, sending legal nastygrams to anyone hosting or sharing it.” (Wired) That attempt to destroy the video made Anonymous very angry. They set out to destroy the church as a joke and along the way, they improved their tactics and developed ingenious ways for taking on mass action.

In February 2013 the group took its skills to the next level. They broke into and hacked computers of HBGary, A U.S. government contractor, and just destroyed the whole system. Anonymous stole thousands of employee emails which were published on a similar website to

that of Wikileaks. In 2011 “Anonymous hackers broke into web servers of Stratfor and copied 200 gigabytes worth of data. Thus far, it appears that the hackers have details only about Stratfor customers who purchased Stratfor’s newsletter, but the hackers could easily have more than that. Several reports indicate Anonymous will next release more than 3.3 million client e-mails. An independent analysis by data loss and identity theft prevention service Identity Finder says that, so far, 9,651 active credit cards, 47,680 unique e-mail addresses, 25,680 unique phone numbers, and 44,188 encrypted passwords were hacked from the A through M name list. More details will be released in the coming days as Anonymous publishes the N through Z list of names. Stratfor looks especially bad in this instance because the credit card data was not encrypted, which means it was much easier than usual for Anonymous to steal and crack open. It’s quite the amateur mistake for a so-called “intelligence” firm.” (VentureBeat)

Anonymous isn’t just about themselves though. This next hack will have you thinking twice about whether or not Anonymous should be taken down. In 2017, white nationalists in Charlottesville, Virginia organized and ignited a rally of violent protests. This event shook our country in one of the worst ways imaginable. The racist white supremacists were back, and this time they were back in a force that none of us thought possible. They had numbers at their command and were coming at people in any way possible, including the internet. Well, Anonymous wasn’t having that. They started by hacking more than a dozen white nationalist websites and adding messages to the sites like” you see color, we see freedom” and “we are watching you Neo-Nazis and know who you are” to scare the supremacists. Then, they singled out the people who contributed to these sites in the hope that authorities would take the necessary actions to find evidence to put the people responsible in jail. (IM NOT CRYING. YOUR CRYING!!) Anonymous then tweeted “We’ve had plenty of anons contribute to the operation

worldwide knowing this is a U.S.-based operation. The fight against fascism is global, so we may consider expanding our operation to work with Anonymous groups in their own countries.” Makes me very happy to know that the silent forces of good are more powerful than the loud noises of stupidity. Anonymous has also taken on the forces of ISIS and the Taliban. Successfully crippling parts of their infrastructure.

The next and final hack in this paper is that of our current president. The hack occurred when Trump was running for office. Anonymous claim it had hacked Trump's Social Security number and a number it claims is his cell phone number as well as public information such as his birth date, children's names, and company address in addition to outdated information such as his legal representation. After the documents were released anonymous tweeted that the information seems to be outdated. I'm not sure how a social security number becomes outdated but when you are as wealthy and powerful as Donald Trump, it may not be too difficult to get a new one.

What Anonymous does is highly questionable, to say the least. Certain things they have done are clearly for the greater good and may even be legal to an extent. In fact, DDoS attacks are clearly illegal under U.K. laws. U.S. laws are less clear on the issue, requiring prosecutors to show that the attackers gained unauthorized access to a computer and caused loss or damage, said Mark Rasch, head of privacy with the Computer Services Corp. and former chief of the Department of Justice computer crime unit. There is no doubt, however, that the group's intrusion into HBGary's computer system ran afoul of federal computer crime statutes. There is also no doubt, however, that the attacks on white supremacists/neo-nazis were and are extremely warranted.

In the beginning, Anonymous only wanted to laugh, have the internet be as free and open as possible, and preserve the rights and freedoms of our first amendment (speech and religion). They got a little lost on the way and certainly hurt people that definitely did not deserve it. It has since rectified and tried to make amends for these mistakes. I believe that Anonymous is a good group of people that will target the bad in this world. If you try to do evil things in this world, especially over the internet, Anonymous will be there to push back, protect what deserves to be protected, and expose you.

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