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Microsoft Hit with Worldwide Windows Azure Cloud Storage Service Outage

By Jeffrey Schwartz | 02/22/2013

Microsoft's Windows Azure cloud service is experiencing worldwide outages affecting its storage services, the company confirmed on Friday afternoon.

The cause appears to be from an expired SSL certificate, which Microsoft is not confirming at this time. An alert on the company's **Windows Azure dashboard** reports that the worldwide outage is affecting SSL traffic, thereby making its storage services unavailable.

"Storage is currently experiencing a worldwide outage impacting HTTPS operations (SSL traffic) due to an expired certificate," according to an alert on the dashboard. "HTTP traffic is not impacted. We are validating the recovery options before implementing them. Further updates will be published to keep you appraised of the situation. We apologize for any inconvenience this causes our customers." An earlier statement on the dashboard stated Microsoft had determined the cause of the outage but didn't disclose it."

A company spokeswoman said Microsoft became aware of the issue at around 8:45 p.m. UTC (United Kingdom time). "We are actively investigating this issue and working to resolve it as soon as possible," the spokeswoman said in an e-mail. "Updates will be published to the Windows Azure dashboard to keep customers apprised of the situation."

Brian Reischl of Sepia Labs, a company consisting of former NewsGator employees, pointed to the SSL certificate with a screen capture, which shows today's expiration date.

"So is it just me, or did the HTTPS certificate for Azure Storage just expire?," Reischl **posted** on the Windows Azure forum.

"If your app is set up to accept reconfiguration on the fly, you might be able to flip to using HTTP instead of HTTPS," he advised. "If not, you're pretty much up a creek. Doing new deployments seems to use storage under the covers, so you can't right now."

A flurry of posts hit Twitter regarding the outage and the expired certificate.

"Windows Azure Storage, Amateur Hour Outage," tweeted **Greg Knieriemen**, a storage, cloud and virtualization evangelist for Hitachi Data Systems. "Awesome -- Microsoft let the *.blob.core.windows.net SSL certificate expire," added **Jason Vallery**..

Charlie Maitland, a consultant in the U.K. specializing in the Microsoft stack, lamented: "Running a global IT business -- $37b: Building a cloud data system -- $5b: Renewing a $10 SSL cert -- Priceless."

Microsoft is advising its customers to monitor the Windows Azure dashboard for further updates on the current outage. The service has caused periodic troubles for some customers, with notable outages occurring in **February 2012** and **December 2012**.

Note: In an earlier version of this article, Microsoft hadn't confirmed the expired SSL certificate as the cause of the outage. It has been updated to reflect Microsoft's confirmation.

About the Author

Jeffrey Schwartz is editor of Redmond magazine and also covers cloud computing for Virtualization Review's Cloud Report. In addition, he writes the Channeling the Cloud column for Redmond Channel Partner. Follow him on Twitter **@JeffreySchwartz**.

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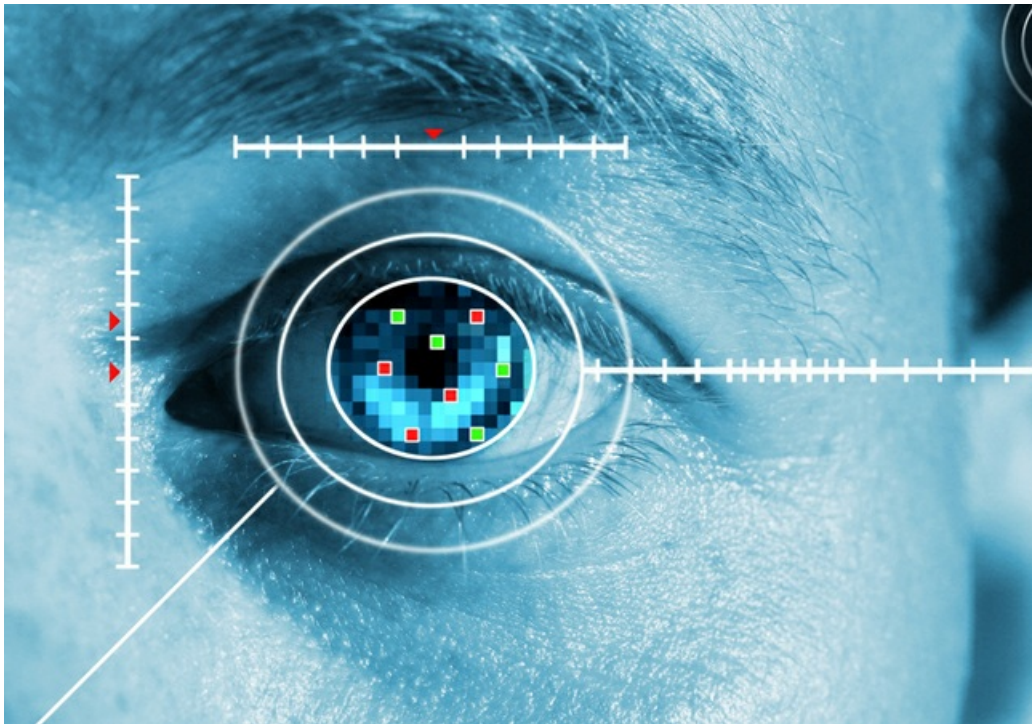
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