**Cybersecurity Case Study: The Sony Pictures Hack**

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The hacker collective "Guardians of Peace" released private information from Sony Pictures Entertainment's (SPE) film studio on November 24, 2014. Employee emails, private and family information, executive pay, copies of unreleased movies at the time, plans for upcoming movies, screenplays, and other data were all included in the data. Then, in order to destroy Sony's computer infrastructure, the criminals used a version of the Shamoon wiper malware. The group demanded during the hack that Sony pull its then-upcoming movie, The Interview, which was produced and directed by Evan Goldberg and Seth Rogen and featured political satire and action comedy. Rogen and James Franco play journalists who arrange an interview with Kim Jong Un, the leader of North Korea, only to be enlisted by the CIA to carry out his murder. Many large U.S. theater chains decided not to screen The Interview after the hacker group threatened terrorist attacks at theaters showing the movie. Sony chose to forego the official premiere and general release of the movie in favor of a digital download and a limited theatrical release the following day in response to these threats.

This came after multiple executives at Sony Pictures received an email on Friday, November 21. The group, "God'sApstls," sent out the message, which called for "monetary compensation" or else "Sony Pictures will be bombarded as a whole." Executives had largely ignored this email, mistook it for spam, or lost it in the deluge of other emails they had received.

On Monday, November 24, 2014, Sony was notified of the hack after a group identifying themselves as the Guardians of Peace warned them that the malware had rendered many Sony employees' computers unusable and that some of the company's sensitive information had been stolen. Additionally, a number of Twitter accounts connected to Sony were compromised.

The message warned Sony to make a decision by 11:00 p.m. UTC that same day, in addition to the malware activation on November 24. But after that deadline passed, there was no apparent threat. The Guardians of Peace started leaking unreleased movies in the days after this hack. To get the attention of social media platforms, they began to make some of the private information public. They did not, however, make clear what they expected in exchange.

The Guardians of Peace threatened Sony on December 8, 2014, using language related to the September 11 attacks that caught the attention of U.S. security agencies, along with the eighth significant data dump of private information. Because of specific threats made against Sony and movie theaters showing The Interview, the United States believes that North Korean state-sponsored hackers were involved.

The SPE discovered on December 8, 2014, that personal information about its employees and their dependents, including names, addresses, SSN, and financial data, may have been acquired by unauthorized individuals as a result of a "brazen cyber-attack." According to a report by C-SPAN on December 7, 2014, 47,000 distinct Social Security numbers were taken from the SPE computer network by hackers.

"North Korean officials had showed concerns about the movie about the assassination of an incumbent head of a sovereign state by saying that allowing the production and distribution of such a film would constitute the most undisguised sponsorship of terrorism and war.

To A $15 million allocation was made by Sony Pictures in its first quarter 2015 financials to deal with the ongoing effects of the hack. Sony strengthened its cyber-security infrastructure and implemented measures to prevent similar attacks from occurring again. After the hack, Sony co-chairperson Amy Pascal announced that she would step down and become more involved in Sony's film production in May 2015.