

= February 2010 Australian cyberattacks =

The February 2010 Australian cyberattacks were a series of denial @-@ of @-@ service attacks conducted by the Anonymous online community against the Australian government in response to proposed web censorship regulations . Operation Titstorm was the name given to the cyber attacks by the perpetrators . They resulted in lapses of access to government websites on 10 and 11 February 2010 . This was accompanied by emails , faxes , and phone calls harassing government offices . The actual size of the attack and number of perpetrators involved is unknown but it was estimated that the number of systems involved ranged from the hundreds to the thousands . The amount of traffic caused disruption on multiple government websites .

Australian Telecommunications Minister Stephen Conroy proposed the regulations that would mainly filter sites with pornographic content . Various groups advocating uncensored access to the Internet , along with companies like Google and Yahoo ! , object to the proposed filter . A spokesperson for Conroy said that the actions were not a legitimate form of protest and called it irresponsible . The attacks also drew criticism from other filter protest groups . The initial stage was followed by small in @-@ person protests on 20 February that were called " Project Freeweb " .

= = Background = =

The attack began as a protest responding to a plan by Australian Telecommunications Minister Stephen Conroy that would require internet service providers to block Australian users from accessing illegal and what the government deemed as " unwanted " content . Websites to be blocked feature pornography showing rape , bestiality , child sex abuse , small @-@ breasted women ( who may appear under the legal age ) , and female ejaculation . Drawn depictions of such acts are included in the proposal . The proposed filter also includes gambling sites along with others showing drug use . A leaked version of the proposed blacklist ( also referred to as the " refused classification " or " RC " list ) also showed sites that did not include adult content . The name " Operation Titstorm " was in reference to the material that would be censored .

Google has questioned the proposal , saying the prohibitions would be too broad . It is strongly opposed by free speech groups . A poll conducted by McNair Ingenuity Research for the Hungry Beast television program found that 80 % of their 1 @,@ 000 respondents were in favour of the concept of the plan . The survey also found that 91 % were concerned about the government 's intent to keep the list of filtered websites a secret .

The Department of Defence 's Cyber Security Operations Centre discovered the attack was coming on 5 February . A statement released by Anonymous to the press two days before the attack said , " No government should have the right to refuse its citizens access to information solely because they perceive it to be ' unwanted ' . " It went on to read , " The Australian Government will learn that one does not mess with our porn . No one messes with our access to perfectly legal ( or illegal ) content for any reason " . Anonymous had previously garnered media attention with protests against Church of Scientology ( Project Chanology ) and the Iranian government . In September 2009 , Prime Minister Kevin Rudd 's website was hacked in a similar protest to proposed web censorship reforms .

= = Attacks = =

Flyers distributed to recruit participants said the attack was to begin at 8 pm AEST on 10 February . On that day , government websites were targeted by denial @-@ of @-@ service attacks . The Communications Department said the hackers had not infiltrated government security , but had instead swamped government computer servers . Sites were left unavailable for sporadic periods throughout the attack . At one point , the Australian Parliament 's website was offline for about two days due to the high volume of requests . Rudd 's government site was also inaccessible for some time . As a primary target , the Communications Department also received a large amount of traffic . Government offices were also flooded with e @-@ mail spam , junk faxes , and prank phone calls .

The Prime Minister 's homepage was vandalized with pornographic images . The flyer released before the attack called for the faxes to focus on cartoon pornography , female ejaculation , and small @-@ breasted pornography .

Reports of the actual size of the attack have varied . One cyber security expert described the attacks as " the equivalent of parking a truck across the driveway of a shopping centre " . A firm marketing security technology said that the peak of the attack was a relatively low 16 @.@ 84 megabits per second . One writer described the 7 @.@ 5 million requests per second that initially brought down the Parliament website as " massive " . The site usually only receives a few hundred per second . It appears that botnets made up of compromised computers were not used . Estimates of the number of attacking systems involved have ranged from hundreds to thousands .

= = Response = =

A spokeswoman for Conroy said such attacks were not a legitimate political protest . According to her , they were " totally irresponsible and potentially deny services to the Australian public " . The Systems Administrators Guild of Australia said that it " condemned DDoS attacks as the wrong way to express disagreement with the proposed law " . Anti @-@ censorship groups criticised the attacks , saying they hurt their cause . A purported spokesperson for the attackers recommended that the wider Australian public protest the filter by signing the petition of Electronic Frontiers Australia .

Anonymous coordinated a second phase with small protests outside the Parliament House in Canberra and in major cities throughout Australia on 20 February . Additional demonstrations were held at some of the country 's embassies overseas . The organizers called the follow @-@ up protests " Project Freeweb " to differentiate them from the criticised cyber attacks .

Several supporters of the attack later said on a messageboard that taking down websites was not enough to convince the government to back down on the web filtering policy and called for violence . Others disagreed with such actions and proposed launching an additional attack on a popular government site . A spokesman for Electronic Frontiers Australia said he believed there was no real intention or capacity to follow through with any of the violent threats .

The attack also resulted in criticism of Australia 's terrorism laws from the The University of New South Wales Law Journal . One writer wrote that the provisions leave " no place for legitimate acts of online protest , or at least sets the penalty far too high for relatively minor cyber @-@ vandalism " .

An Australian teenager was charged with four counts of inciting other hackers to impair electronic communications and two of unauthorised access to restricted data for his role in the attack . He was ordered to pay a bond instead of being convicted after pleading guilty and showing good behaviour .

In July 2010 , Conroy delayed implementing the plan pending a 12 @-@ month review into how refused classification content was rated . The proposal is not expected to go forward due to the opposition from The Coalition and the Greens . Internet service providers Telstra and Optus have both agreed to voluntarily block some content .