

The Star-Ledger

TODAY: Mostly sunny.
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7 a.m. 2 p.m. 7 p.m.
40° 56° 48°

STATE EDITION
Tuesday, November 17, 2009

THE NEWSPAPER FOR NEW JERSEY

75¢

Hacker faces jail time for cyberattack

BY NIC CORBETT
FOR THE STAR-LEDGER

In January 2008, online hackers launched a massive attack on the Church of Scientology's websites, forcing the church to hire computer security experts to reinstate its online presence.

In the end, only one person, 19-year-old Dmitry Guzner of Verona, admitted playing a role in the cyberassault. Tomorrow, three days before his 20th birthday, Guzner is expected to be sentenced by Judge Joseph A. Greenaway Jr. in federal court in Newark. Guzner, who has pleaded guilty to "unauthorized impairment of



Catch a line video from the group "Anonymous" at nj.com

a protected computer," faces up to 2½ years in prison and nearly \$119,000 in fines.

The online attack by members of a loosely formed, leaderless group called Anonymous was meant as an anti-Scientology protest. According to the Anonymous website wayweprotest.net, the group was upset by the church's attempts to suppress a leaked promotional video featuring actor and Scientologist Tom

Cruise, who made enthusiastic claims about the religion.

"I think they were relying on a very simple premise, that the number of people arrested and convicted of these kinds of attacks is very low," said Jose Nazario, manager of security research at Arbor Networks, which helps companies keep their websites secure.

On Jan. 17, 2008, Guzner and an undisclosed number of cohorts launched a distributed denial of service attack, or DDOS for short, against the religious organization's web presence, said Assistant U.S. Attorney Erez Liebermann, who

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Dmitry Guzner, 19, is to be sentenced tomorrow for his role in a cyber attack against the Church of Scientology.

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is handing the Guzner case.

Using a program downloaded from an Anonymous-related message board, the group sent so many hits to the Scientology websites that it overwhelmed the church's servers, making the pages temporarily inaccessible to other users.

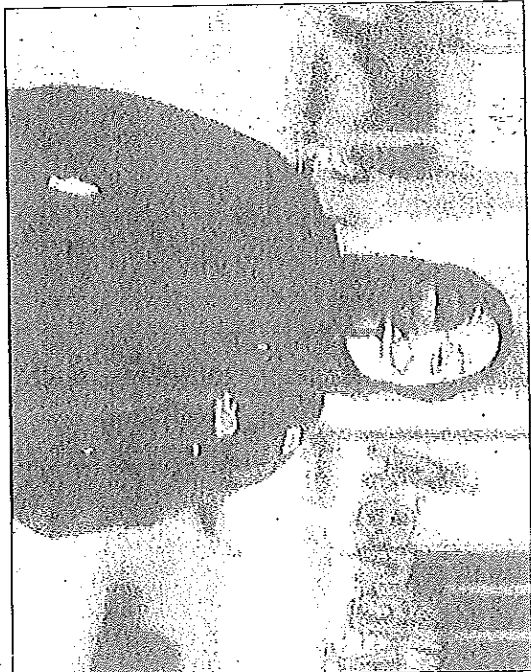
The main website was down for about 24 hours until the church moved its servers to an outside hosting company. The church then hired another company to divert traffic coming from the attackers. Nazario measured 488 attacks by individuals on Jan. 19, the longest of which lasted almost two hours.

The cybervigilantes kept up the attack for at least 12 days, according to a prosecutor involved in the case.

Others made prank calls to the "mother church" in Los Angeles and sent faxes of black paper to use up the toner in the fax machines, said Kendrick Moxon, a lawyer for the Church of Scientology.

Anonymous members, or Anons for short, see the church, founded by science-fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard in the mid-1950s, as a dangerous cult, and they have pledged to expose it for what they see as fraud and other abuses, the members said in press releases posted on the internet.

A YouTube video by Anonymous, which surfaced shortly after the attacks, featured a robotic



Verona teen Dinty Guzner caught the attention of federal authorities after a YouTube video of a protest of the Church of Scientology in New York City identified one of the participants as "Aendy," which is also Guzner's online handle.

voice that warned the church of the group's plan to systematically dismantle the religious organization "for the good of your followers, for the good of mankind and for our own enjoyment." The declaration of war was followed by prank calls, juvenile stunts, death threats, vandalism of churches and organized protests across the country, Moxon said.

Referring to the January 2008 cyberattack, Moxon, who attended Guzner's court hearing last month, said: "That was the first such incident. From that point on, things got out of control."

Guzner was arrested after a YouTube video of a real-life protest that mentioned his internet handle "Aendy" caught the attention of federal authorities. During

His lawyer, Edward McQuat, also wouldn't comment, saying he has to respect his client's wishes. In the wake of the cyberattack, the church has labeled Anonymous a hate group.

"This group Anonymous, sir, they're not nice people," Moxon told Greenaway at a court hearing last month. "They're haters." Moxon carried with him a 42-page glossy magazine about Anonymous published by an arm of the church, which describes the group's members as "cyberbullies."

Authorities have not disclosed much information about how they caught Guzner, other than to say they identified him after noticing the name "Aendy" was used in a YouTube video to describe one of four masked individuals plastering anti-Scientology films on signs outside the church's Midtown Manhattan offices. For that protest, or "raid," which took place on the third day of the cyberattack in 2008, Aendy and the other three protesters wore the Guy Fawkes masks from the movie "V for Vendetta" favored by members of Anonymous. In 1605, Fawkes conspired with others in an attempt to blow up the Parliament building in London.

The FBI and the U.S. Secret Service, as part of the Electronic Crimes Task Force in Los Angeles, worked to identify Aendy as Guzner, prosecutors said. They searched his home in Brooklyn and turned up a Guy Fawkes mask.

The church has asked the federal judge in Newark demand Guzner pay nearly \$119,000 — the cost to divert the DDoS attacks and pay for protective services. But Guzner's lawyer said just \$37,500, a portion of the contract, was agreed upon in the plea deal, in which Guzner admitted to participating in the attack.

Prosecutors have recommended Guzner be sentenced to 12 to 18 months with no chance of parole, followed by two to three years of probation. Three weeks ago, a second man was charged in connection with the DDoS attack. A federal grand jury in Los Angeles indicted Brian Thomas Mettenbrink on charges of conspiracy and transmission of a code, information, program or command to a protected computer. The 20-year-old is accused of participating in the attack from his Iowa State University dorm room, according to the indictment.

In March 2008, before his arrest, Guzner posted on an online message board a link to a site he created for a class. Instead of using filler text for one sample page, he included a narrative that spoofs the Tom Cruise video, based on Cruise's claim that Scientologists are the only ones who can help in a car crash.

The actor is depicted rescuing a woman from a four-car pileup on the freeway. "Stand back, emergency workers," Cruise says in the story, which is widely copied on Anonymous websites. "Put down your jaws of life and crowbars. I am a Scientologist."

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