

source: TheRegister.co.uk

Online hacktivist collective Anonymous, operating under the banners Operation:Payback and "Operation Avenge Assange" have launched a series of DDoS attacks against organisations and people seen as being opposed to Wikileaks and its spokesman Julian Assange.

Meanwhile, Operation:Payback itself has been subjected to counter-DDoS attacks thought to originate with US "patriotic" contra-hacktivistas.

Sites attacked by the Anonymous group have included PostFinance.ch, belonging to the Swiss bank which recently froze an account controlled by Assange, and also ThePayPalblog.com - the main blog operated by PayPal, targeted for refusing to process Wikileaks contributions. DNS outfit EveryDNS has also come into the Operation:Payback gunsights for cutting off Wikileaks' DNS service, saying that online attacks targeted at the leak site were crippling its other customers.

Over the last couple of days, other sites have been DDoS'd for various reasons by the Anonymous group, including the Swedish lawyers representing the women Assange is alleged to have committed sexual offences against. Charges made by Swedish prosecutors have since resulted in the issue of a European arrest warrant and Assange was yesterday cuffed in London: British judges have elected to refuse bail and the colourful Wikileaks impresario is now in jail pending an extradition hearing.

This process has angered the members of Operation:Payback sufficiently that they have also elected to mount strikes against the website of the Swedish prosecutors' office and briefly, according to anonymous* claims received by the *Reg*, against Interpol. (Interpol did issue a

"Red Notice" calling for Assange's arrest at the behest of Swedish authorities, but in fact this has no relevance for British police dealing with a request from another EU nation: in such cases a European warrant is required for the UK cops to act.)

Yesterday, the Anonymous hacktivists decided to attack the site of US Senator Joe Lieberman as well, presumably as a result of remarks he has made describing Wikileaks operations as crimes violating the US Espionage Act - and hinting that Wikileaks' mainstream-media partners, collaborating on trawling and redacting files prior to public release, have violated the law also.

Some Operation:Payback members also elected to attack the site of former Alaska governor and vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin for suggesting that Assange should be hunted down like a terrorist.

The Anonymous attacks have been run on through a chatroom, with users attaching their computers to a voluntary botnet for use in the DDoS strikes. Panda Security [reported](#) that as the Lieberman attacks began there were almost 1,000 users in the chatroom and nearly 600 machines in the botnet.

Naturally enough Operation:Payback itself has been subject to counter-DDoS efforts of varying strength almost since it began, but following the decision to attack Lieberman's official US government site the Anonymous operation began to be hit much harder and suffered dozens of outages itself, one lasting almost two hours. Panda Security analysts assessed that the intensified counter-DDoS attacks were coming from self-described American "patriot" hackers - playing contra to the Anonymous hacktivistas, perhaps.

Meanwhile US Army private soldier Bradley Manning, believed to have supplied not only the vast stash of diplomatic cables now being drip-fed by Wikileaks but most of its previous significant material as well (the Baghdad gunship videos, Iraq and Afghanistan "war logs" etc) remains in military prison charged with an array of security violations. His name is seldom mentioned any more in the ongoing saga of Wikileaks, Assange and the online scufflers aligned with and against them.

Operation:Payback uses a banner quote from John Perry Barlow, a founder of the Electronic Frontier Foundation:

"The first serious infowar is now engaged. The field of battle is WikiLeaks. You are the troops."

Some context for the online teacup "war" might be provided by the tiny size of the Anonymous volunteer botnet compared to today's heavyweight [criminal bot networks](#). There wasn't even an attempt to actually attack PayPal, just its corporate blog. ®

Bootnote

*These emails were purportedly from Anonymous, but naturally we can't vouch for their authenticity. As the faceless informant put it (this is verbatim):

Anyone using a name and claiming to represent Anonymous is a charlotten, a fraud, a 13 year old basement dweller surrounded by crusty socks and empty Dew bottles, seeking glory among his friends on Tumblr.