

FBI targets Anonymous hacking group in series of raids on homes

Written by bad_brain

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A 16-year-old boy was arrested in London Tuesday night while the FBI detained at least 14 people after raiding homes across the US as part of an international operation targeting the hacking activist groups Anonymous and LulzSec.

Arrests and raids took place in Florida, California, and New Jersey and were aimed at targets suspected to be members of the hacking collective which has hit the headlines in recent months for a series of high-profile attacks. Computers and other equipment were also seized at several addresses in New York as local agents executed search warrants in New York city and Long Island, but – no arrests were made.

"These search warrants are being executed in connection with an ongoing FBI investigation," a New York FBI spokesman said. More arrests may follow, legal sources said.

A spokesman for the Metropolitan police confirmed that the London arrest was linked to the US operation. He added: "Officers from the Met's computer's E-crime unit arrested a 16 year-old male on Tuesday afternoon on suspicion of breaching the Computer Misuse Act. He was arrested at an address in south London and remains in custody at a central London police station."

The actions on both sides of the Atlantic followed raids aimed at members of Anonymous that have taken place in others parts of the world, including Italy, Spain, Switzerland and Turkey. More than 30 people thought to be linked to the group have been arrested.

Anonymous hit the mainstream media headlines in December when it rallied to the support of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange. It has an agenda of sympathy for freedom of information and attacked the websites of companies like Visa, MasterCard and PayPal in protest at those firms

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severing ties to WikiLeaks and making it difficult for Assange to raise money from supporters.

Since then hacking has become a hot topic in the US and there have been other cyber-attacks by Anonymous members or supporters on targets such as the CIA and Fox News and the Arizona Department of Corrections. The latter was targeted out of anger at Arizona's efforts to crack down on illegal immigrants.

Often, after successful attacks, people claiming to be part of the group will post messages on the social messaging service Twitter boasting of the attacks or providing proof that they hit their targets.

Hacking comes in various forms, but a common method used by Anonymous has been a "distributed denial of service" attack where members create a computer network that bombards a website with requests for information and eventually overwhelms it with traffic. Such an attack is illegal.

Another hacking collective, called LulzSec, has also been the target of law enforcement ire in America. Last month, FBI agents raided an address in Iowa and questioned a woman about possible links to the group. LulzSec hit the headlines on Monday when it hacked the website of the Sun newspaper. It later claimed to have obtained password information for the email accounts of senior News International executives including former chief executive Rebekah Brooks, who is at the centre of the phone-hacking storm surrounding the company.