

Cyber-Hacking Team Busted In Wide Attacks

David B. Caruso, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A group of expert hackers who attacked governments and corporations around the globe have been arrested after its ringleader — one of the world's most-wanted computer vandals — turned against his comrades and secretly began working as an informant for the FBI months ago, authorities announced Tuesday.

Five people were charged in court papers unsealed in federal court in New York, and authorities revealed that a sixth person, Hector Xavier Monsegur of New York, has pleaded guilty.

Monsegur was portrayed in court papers as the ringleader, a legendary figure known in the hacking underworld as "Sabu." Authorities said he formed an elite hacking organization last May and named it "Lulz Security" or "LulzSec." "Lulz" is Internet slang that can be interpreted as "laughs," "humor" or "amusement."

Despite the organization's lighthearted name, authorities said Monsegur and his followers embarked on a dastardly stream of deeds against business and government entities in the U.S. and around the world, resulting in the theft of confidential information, the defacing of websites and attacks that temporarily put victims out of business.

Their exploits included attacks on cyber-security firms and the posting of a fake story that slain rapper Tupac Shakur was alive in New Zealand.

As their exploits became known, some hackers associated with the group boasted about their prowess.

Monsegur was charged with conspiracy to engage in computer hacking, among other offenses. Authorities said he pleaded guilty Aug. 15.

According to the court papers, he was an "influential member of three hacking organizations — Anonymous, Internet Feds and Lulz Security — that were responsible for multiple cyberattacks on the computer systems of various businesses and governments in the United States and throughout the world."

According to the court papers, he acted as a "rooter," a computer hacker who identified vulnerabilities in the computer systems of potential victims.

The court papers said he participated in attacks over the past few years on Visa, MasterCard and PayPal; government computers in Tunisia, Algeria, Yemeni and Zimbabwe; Fox Broadcasting Co. and the Tribune Co.; PBS; and the U.S. Senate.

Irish police said Tuesday that one of the five suspects had been arrested and was

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being held at a Dublin police station. They refused to release his name, in keeping with police force policy.

LulzSec is a spinoff of the loosely organized hacking collective Anonymous. Its members attained notoriety last May by attacking the PBS website and posting the false story about Shakur.

According to court papers unsealed Tuesday, Monsegur and others planted the fake story in retaliation for what they perceived to be unfavorable news coverage of Wikileaks on the PBS news program "Frontline."

Some alleged associates of the group are already facing charges elsewhere. An English teenager, Ryan Cleary, was arrested by the British in June. In July, a reputed LulzSec spokesman, Jake Davis, was arrested in Scotland.

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