



The Opt-in Social Protesting Botnet







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 Atlanta based security company focused on enterprise detection and mitigation of botnets



- Been in IT industry for two decades over half of which has been 100% employed in security. Built and run international pentest teams, R&D groups and consulting practices around the world.
- Formerly Chief Security Strategist for IBM, Director of X-Force for ISS, Professional Services Director for NGS Software, Head of Attack Services EMEA, etc.
- Frequent writer, columnist and blogger with lots of whitepapers...
 - http://blog.damballa.com & http://technicalinfodotnet.blogspot.com/







Hacktivism – what's it all about?

Why isn't it always "hacktivism"?

Where's the social element?

What tools are available?

 How will cyber-protesting change things?

 Using social networks for command and control?

How will this impact business?



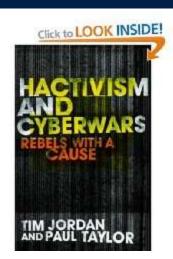






A definition of "Hacktivism"...

 "The nonviolent use of illegal or legally ambiguous digital tools in pursuit of political ends."



 "These tools include web site defacements, redirects, denial-of-service attacks, information theft, web site parodies, virtual sit-ins, virtual sabotage, and software development."



Hacktivism - Defacement

OS

Linux

Linux

Linux

Linux

Hundreds of Dutch web sites hacked by Islamic hackers

DATE

2008/08/25

- Mass defacement
- August 2008



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FLAGS

HM

HM

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DOMAIN

krommeweg1.nl

wimcomputers.nl

zjosque.wimdesign.nl

wimwebsitesolutions.nl

ATTACKER

nEt^DeViL

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VIEW





Coordinated Russia vs Georgia cyber attacks

- August 2008
- Hactivist messages left across Web forums
 - "For our motherland, brothers!"
 - "Your country is calling you"
- Distributed lists of targets
 - DDoS
 - Site defacements
 - SQL Injection

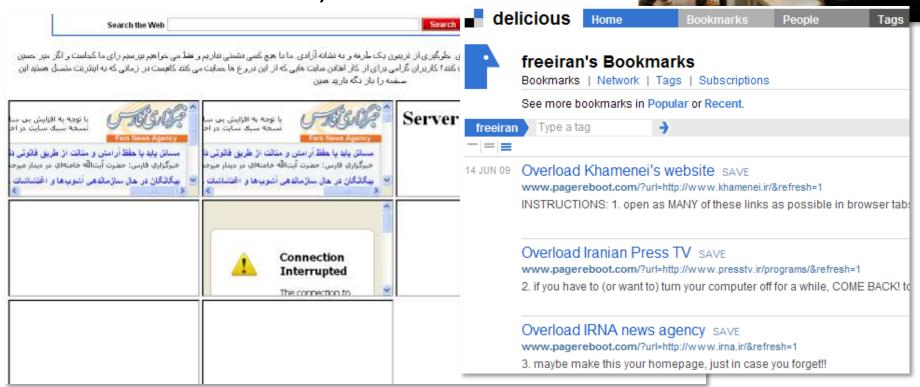
location	result			min. rrt	avg. rrt	max prt
Florida, U.S.A.	Okay			59.4		60.5
Amsterdam, Netherlands	Okay			149.3	164.6	275.4
Melbourne, Australia	0kay			173.8	174.5	175.0
Singapore, Singapore	0kay			208.5	214.0	238.6
New York, U.S.A.	Packets	lost	(100%)			
Amsterdam2, Netherlands	Packets	lost	(100%)			
Austinl, U.S.A.	Packets	lost	(100%)			
London, United Kingdom	Packets	lost	(100%)			
Stockholm, Sweden	Packets	lost	(100%)			
Cologne, Germany	Packets	lost	(100%)			
Chicago, U.S.A.	Packets	lost	(100%)			
Austin, U.S.A.	Packets	lost	(100%)			
Amsterdam3, Netherlands	Packets	lost	(100%)			
Krakow, Poland	Packets	lost	(100%)			
Paris, France	Packets	lost	(100%)			
Copenhagen, Denmark	Packets	lost	(100%)			
San Francisco, U.S.A.	Packets	lost	(100%)			
Vancouver, Canada	Packets	lost	(100%)			
Madrid, Spain	Packets	lost	(100%)			
Shanghai, China	Packets	lost	(100%)			
Lille, France	Packets	lost	(100%)			
Zurich, Switzerland	Packets	lost	(100%)			
Munchen, Germany	Packets	lost	(100%)			
Cagliari, Italy	Packets	lost	(100%)			
Hong Kong, China	Packets	lost	(100%)			
Johannesburg, South AfricaPackets		lost	(100%)			
Porto Alegre, Brazil	Packets	lost	(100%)			
Sydney, Australia	Packets	lost	(100%)			
Mumbai, India	Packets					
Santa Clara, U.S.A.	Packets	lost	(100%)			



Hacktivism – Internal...

Citizen-based hactivism against internal political sites

Iran elections, June 2009





Changing times...





... define "political"?





Introduction



- Social Network phenomenon creating new forums for mass communication and event coordination
- Virtual community "groups" can be created to address passionate topics, political ideals and social injustices
- Groups tend to attract like-minded communities of interest and can swell their ranks rapidly
- Members of a group with targeted agenda's can promote calls to action and facilitate "mob" responses
- Distribution of cyber arms and coordinated attacks possible





Social Networking Sites

Social networking sites on the increase e.g.



- Huge numbers of online members
- Almost all sites have the ability to create new "groups" or "forums" for discussion and information sharing

Site	Members		
Facebook	400,000,000		
MySpace	130,000,000		
Skyrock	22,000,000		
LinkedIn	65,000,000		
Orkut	100,000,000		
Bebo	40,000,000		
Hi5	80,000,000		
Nexopia	1,400,000		
Mixi	24,000,000		
Vkontakte	75,000,000		
Netlog	62,000,000		
Habbo	162,000,000		
Friendster	115,000,000		

Wikipedia



Common Interest Social Network Groups

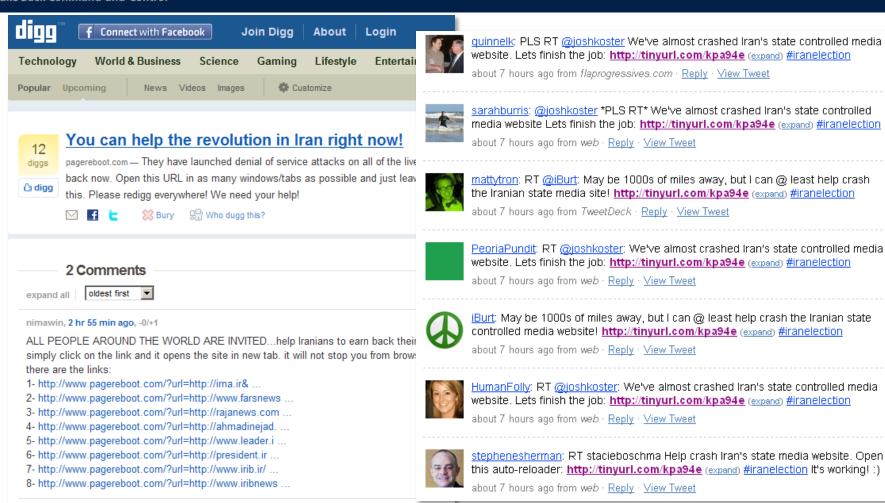
• Example: Military actions in the Gaza territory led to new social network groups supporting the opposing sides (Jan 2009)







Iran Protesting – June 2009



5/31/2010

ElectricRebel, 2 hr 44 min ago, -0/+1

You can also help the revolution by getting the word about Tor. It can help them get around any Youtube, Twitter, Facebook, etc. If you have any contacts in Iran, tell them immediately.



... the governmental response

- WHEN thousands of protestors took to the streets in Iran following this year's disputed presidential election, Twitter messages sent by activists let the world know about the brutal policing that followed. A few months earlier, campaigners in Moldova used Facebook to organize protests against the country's communist government, and elsewhere too the internet is playing an increasing role in political dissent.
- Now governments are trying to regain control. By reinforcing their efforts to monitor activity online, they hope to deprive dissenters of information and the ability to communicate.
- The latest evidence of these clampdowns comes in a report on the Middle East and north Africa by the OpenNet Initiative (ONI), a collaboration of researchers based in the UK and North America.
 Among the restrictions it reports are clampdowns on Facebook in Syria and the use of hidden cameras in Saudi Arabia's internet cafes.
 NewScientist



Moving Beyond "Discussion"

- Popular movements and causes within a social network may stretch beyond joining an online group and participation in group discussions
- Online groups are an ideal vehicle for organizing more influential or disrupting mass protests
 - Physical
 - "here's the private phone number of the ambassador. Tell her what you really think."
 - "meet outside the French embassy on Sunday with your plaque"
 - Cyber
 - "everyone email staff@embassy.fr with your photos"
 - "their Web site reboots if you type ###### in to the visa request page. If we all do this, no one will be able to get a visa!"





Cyber-Jihad Communities

- Numerous external Web sites already exist specifically for the coordination of cyber attacks
 - Most sites are organized along religious and political views
 - Independent of social network sites but often referred to from them
- Several Web sites also offer tools that community members can download and target a mutual adversary
 - Often referred to as a "Cyber-Jihad"



Electronic Jihad allows users to target specific IP addresses for attack in order to take any servers running at those IP addresses offline. The application even includes a Windows-like interface that lets users choose from a list of target Web sites provided via the Al-jinan site, select an attack speed (weak, medium, or strong), and the click on the "attack" button.



Al-jinan site(s) shut down late 2007





External Cyber Jihad Coordination

External Web sites promoting tools and tactics to target

adversaries

Social network forums and groups often link to external tool distribution sites



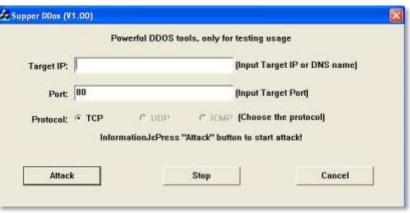




Community Attack Tools

- Tools used for community targeted attacks are typically of the distributed denial of service (DDoS) variety
- Target lists normally agreed in advance
- Most common DDoS tool categories used for cyber-jihad:
 - Mail bombers
 - Send hundreds of emails per minute to a specific email address
 - Network flooders
 - Saturate Web site connections
 - Exhaust system resources
 - ICMP flooding



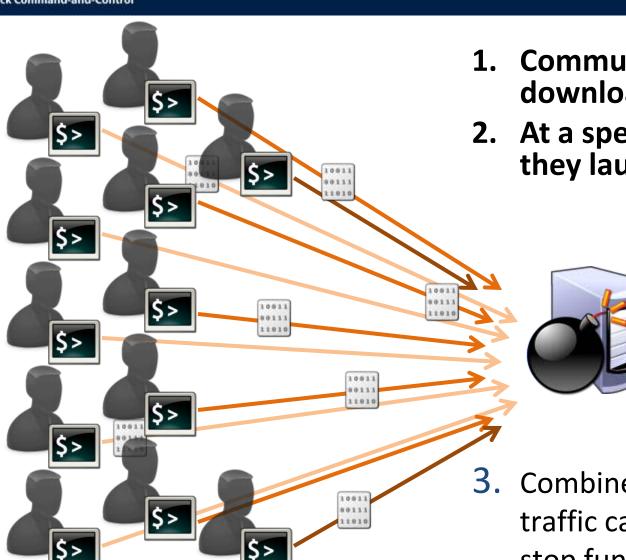


Common network DDoS testing tool

Korean mail bomber circa. 2007



DDoS Mechanics



- 1. Community members download the attack tool
- 2. At a specified date & time they launch their attack

5,000 home DSL users launching a simultaneous attack can create:

- * 1.3 Gbps traffic volume,
- * 150m emails per hour,
- * 250k transactions per second

Combined volume of attack traffic causes the target to stop functioning





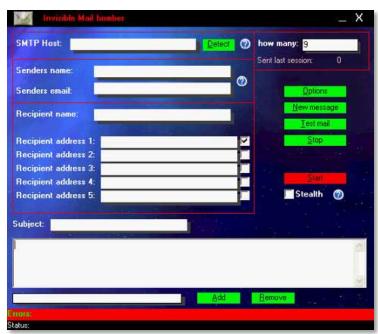
Mail Bombers

- Mail bomber software freely available
- 180+ bombers currently in circulation
 - Mail bombers are very easy to create
 - Source code is widely available











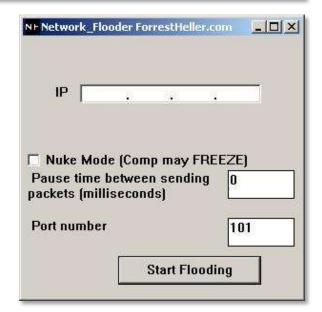
Network Flooders

• Easy to use (and create)

- "Point and shoot"
- Regionalization of tools
- Themed versions









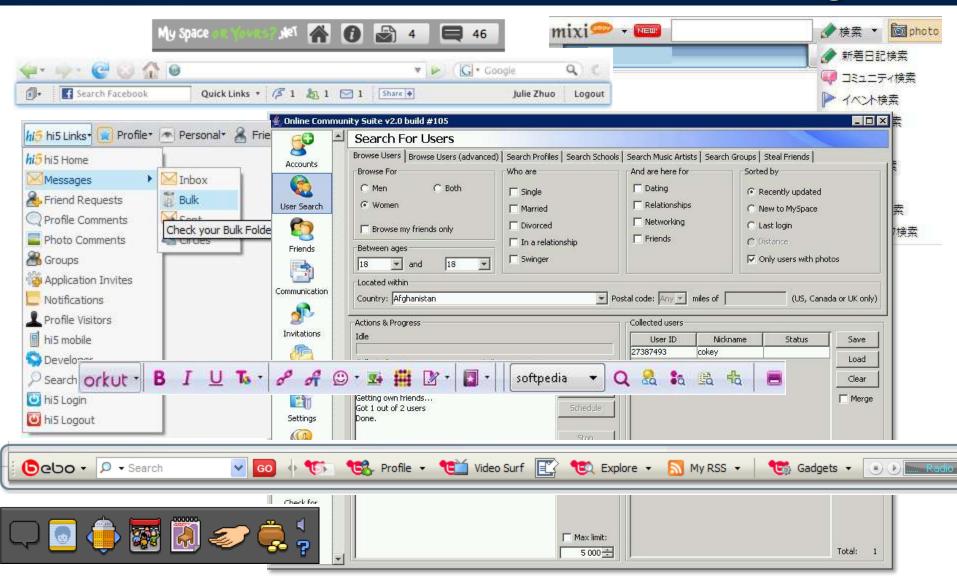
Plugging in to Social Networks

Most popular social networking sites are Web 2.0 enabled

- Typically have their own framework and development languages
- Developers can create custom tools for site integration
- Two primary classes of tool development
 - Browser toolbars and installable applications that maintain a constant link and communication stream with the social network site
 - In-site application "widgets" that can be installed within page content and shared amongst users when interfacing directly with the site
- Site-specific tools already a security issue
 - Worms that propagate through scripts embedded within site content
 - Widgets that automatically crawl accounts to retrieve personal information

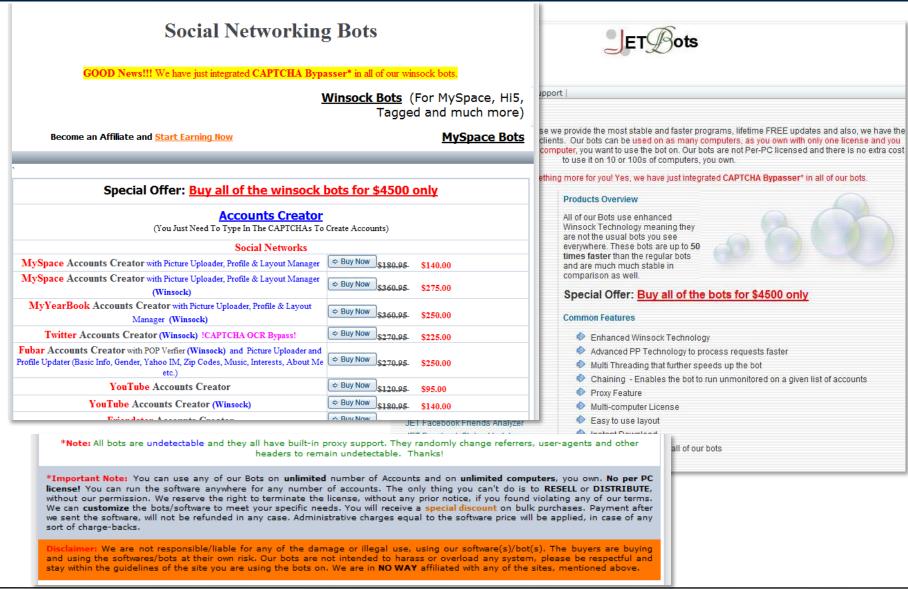


Bridging Tools for Social Networking Sites





Social Networking Bots







Looking to the Future...



Social Network Groups

Coordinating Information



DDoS Attack Tools

Web & Mail Saturation



Web 2.0 Integration Tools

Automation Bridge & Toolbars



If all these "features" are combined, what do we get?





Looking to the Future...



Cyber Protest Steamroller

Social network coordinated DDoS



Community Toolkit

Combination Attack Tool



- Download the software package, install, and participate
- Social network group provides command and control instructions
- Built-in DDoS functionality (Mail, Web, and more)



Why Would Anyone Do This?

These kinds of discussions already occur

Ease of participation

- "Donate the unused power of your computer to the cause..."
- "Use your spare Internet bandwidth while you're asleep..."
- "Automatically further the cause just by installing this tool..."

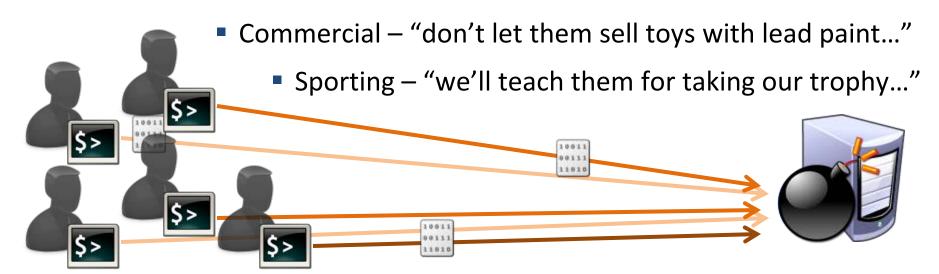
Vagueness concerning legalities of the protest

- "If it's OK for me to send 20 emails with big attachments, why can't I send 100, or a thousand, or even a million?"
- "I can open 10 Web browser windows of their Web site and help prevent others from accessing the site. Why can't I open 32,000 virtual windows?"
- "Whenever I type ##### on their site it slows down for 5 seconds. Why can't I send #### continuously all day tomorrow?"



Who are the Likely Targets?

- Group creation and "mob" attacks will likely driven by an increasingly broad spectrum of issues – e.g.
 - Political "oppose the military junta in..."
 - Ideological "eating meat is bad, close down XXX turkey farm..."
 - Theological "Jedi is not a legitimate religion, don't let them recruit..."
 - Local "stop the invasion of XXX within our community..."





Looking Further in to the Future...

Why limit the tool to a single group or **Community Toolkit** community? Combination Attack Tool Beyond Web and Mail DDoS, what other capabilities could further an online protest?

Community Capabilities

- Automatically contribute tool access to each subscribed group.
- "Time-share" spare computer capacity with enabled groups.

Expanded Protest Features

- Automatically leave defamatory messages, disinformation and comments in popular forums and blogs.
- Hook other social network sites and communication channels to recruit or DoS – e.g. LinkedIn and Twitter.
- Integrate VoIP functions to leave voice messages and DoS telephony systems.



Tangential Community Attack Platforms

- Social Network integration tools already porting over to Smartphone's...
- Additional attack vectors:
 - SMS and MMS flooding capabilities
 - Voice and voice mailbox denial of service
 - Proximity-based WiFi DoS and exploitation







- Community engagement models
 - Make use of free same-provider calls
 - "Donate \$20 of calls and SMS per month to the cause"
 - "Everyone dial 911 at the same time!"

DAMBALLA Take Back Command-and-Control

Attack Ramifications

Economic Exhaustion

- Prevent customers/clients from accessing Internet services
- Swamp internal systems and disrupt business processes
- Drive up hosting and cloud costs

Public disinformation

 Defamatory information and brand erosion

Flooding of non-Internet systems

- Harassment of business executives
- Unreachable telephony systems and emergency services





NO TRESPASSING POLICE ORDER

CODIFIED ORDINANCE #623.0

Dealing with the threat

DAMBALLA Take Back Command-and-Control

Protection Strategies

- The threat is as complex as it is broad
 - No single protection solution will curtail the threat
- Instead, measures need to be taken within:
 - the Social Network site
 - the targeted organization
 - organizations whose employees can contribute to attacks
 - the ISP/Telco infrastructure routing the attack traffic
 - the abused intermediary sites that may host defamatory material



Social Network Sites

- Social Network sites bear the greatest burden in protecting organizations from being targeted by their members
- Most sites already have exhaustive user agreements that prohibit the discussion and participation of these attacks
 - Unfortunately, they appear to be rarely enforced...

Deep Content Inspection

Monitoring Group Discussion Content

Identification of malicious code, attack coordination, and breach of site usage agreements

Content Filtering

Removal or Sanitization of Content

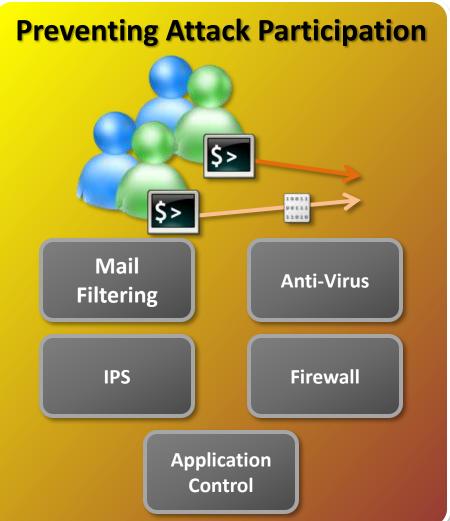
Filtering of offending content and discussions





Enterprise Protection







Intermediaries









- Critical interception point...... the CnC
- Leash through which cyberprotesting tools are managed and coordinated
- Weakest point for shutting down a cyber-protest
 - Easiest vector for dealing with the threat
 - Within the capabilities of most enterprises





Cyber-protesting, get used to it...

 Hacktivism and cyber-protesting are different and diverging



- Easier to become involved in a protest
- Ramifications are fuzzy...

Are you a victim or an enabler?

- Receiving end of an attack
- Facilitating an attack on others







Further Reading



- The Opt-in Botnet Generation
 - http://www.damballa.com/downloads/r pubs/Opt-In Botnets.pdf
- The Botnet vs. Malware Relationship
 - http://www.damballa.com/downloads/d pubs/WP Botnet vs Malware.pdf

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