

AVG Researchers Warn of Political Hacktivists Defacing Facebook Members' Pages

AVG (AU/NZ) Pty Ltd has announced that researchers at AVG Technologies have discovered a new threat to Facebook: Political Hacktivism, or the non-violent use of illegal or legally ambiguous digital tools in pursuit of political ends. Over the weekend of 5-6 June 2010, AVG researchers noticed that a number of Facebook accounts had seemingly been hacked by Turkish hackers in retaliation for the recent Gaza blockade incident.

The threats seem to take two forms which AVG researchers note probably indicates there are two individuals or groups involved, and it appears they are Turkish hackers. These tools include web site defacements, redirects, denial-of-service attacks, information theft, web site parodies, virtual sit-ins, virtual sabotage, and software development.

The number of hacked accounts is fairly small, so far less than fifty, which would indicate that it is not an automated attack, but the number is still increasing, albeit slowly, said Roger Thompson, AVG Chief Research Officer. This is the first time, as far as I am aware, that Facebook has been a victim of political hacktivism.

Thompson continued, Given that the attack seems to be being run by Turkish hackers, and that Turkish hackers had once claimed a world record for defacing 37k pages in a single day, we should not discount the thought that they might find an automated way to move, and we should be extra vigilant with what we click. Think before you link.

This hacktivism on Facebook is another in a continuing string of malicious attacks to the popular social networking site.

Lloyd Borrett, Marketing Manager of AVG (AU/NZ), said: AVG recognises the power that social networking brings to our professional and personal lives and does not advocate giving up on the technology altogether. However, we do have some recommendations on how to best protect yourself.

Make sure you practice safe surfing. AVG LinkScanner is a free web tool that can identify web based threats in real-time and let you know if a page or link is poisoned, when your web browser tries to load the web page.

If you ever have to install a viewer to watch a video, something is probably not right. Go to the video player applications official website and download the application there. Never download through a link.

Make sure your anti-virus and security software is up to date. If you dont have anti-virus and anti-spyware software, you can download AVG Anti-Virus Free Edition at www.avgfree.com.au.

Remember that any information available about you online is potentially there forever, Borrett continued. Friends and family you trust, but also friends of friends who you may not trust, plus current and future employers, and the bad guys can all easily access your information if you dont appropriately change the privacy settings on social networking sites and be discerning about who you accept as your friend. You can check what information about you is publicly available online by typing your own name into a search engine.

AVG (AU/NZ) has a comprehensive range of security tips for home and business users on its web site at www.avg.com.au/resources/security-tips/.

The Australian Government web site Stay Smart Online also contains useful advice for protecting yourself from Internet threats at www.staysmartonline.gov.au. The new publication Protecting yourself online: what everyone needs to know contains practical advice and important information for everyone on how to stay safe online. You can also view or sign up for the plain language, free Stay Smart Online Alert Service at www.staysmartonline.gov.au/alerts.

About AVG (AU/NZ) Pty Ltd www.avg.com.au

Based in Melbourne, AVG (AU/NZ) Pty Ltd distributes the AVG range of Anti-Virus and Internet Security products in Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific. AVG software solutions provide complete real-time protection against the malware, viruses, spam, spyware, adware, worms, Trojans, phishing and exploits used by cyber-criminals, hackers, scammers and identity thieves. AVG protects everything important and personal inside computers documents, account details and passwords, music, photos and more all while allowing users to work, bank, shop and play games online in safety. AVG provides outstanding technical solutions and exceptional value for consumers, small to medium business and enterprise clients. AVG delivers always-on, always up-to-date protection across desktop, and notebook PCs, plus file and e-mail servers in the home and at work in SMBs, corporations, government agencies and educational institutions.

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Media resources, including logos, box shots, screen shots etc., are available online at: <http://www.avg.com.au/media>

Join the AVG Community for information, video content and pictures: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/officialavg/sets/>