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## Anonymous hacks MIT

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EDITORS

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MIT's network fell to a denial-of-service attack Sunday evening, allegedly by the Internet activist group Anonymous, cutting campus users off from Internet access to most websites for nearly three hours. The attack came in the wake of accusations that MIT's role in the pending litigation against Internet activist Aaron Swartz contributed to his Friday suicide. On Monday afternoon, MIT spokeswoman Kimberly C. Allen confirmed that the outage was due to a denial-of-service attack (DoS).

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Between roughly 7 p.m. and 9:50 p.m. Sunday evening, users of MIT's network lost access to most websites, and MIT's own web properties — like the mit.edu homepage — were inaccessible on the Web at large. Homepages on two MIT subdomains, cogen.mit.edu and rledev.mit.edu, were rewritten as a message from Anonymous about the Swartz case.

"Whether or not the government contributed to his suicide, the government's prosecution of Swartz was a grotesque miscarriage of justice, a distorted and perverse shadow of the justice that Aaron died fighting for — freeing the publicly-funded scientific literature from a publishing system that makes it inaccessible to most of those who paid for it — enabling the collective betterment of the world through the facilitation of sharing — an ideal that we should all support," said the message.

The message was careful to not blame MIT directly: "We do not consign blame or responsibility upon MIT for what has happened, but call for all those feel heavy-hearted in their proximity to this awful loss to acknowledge instead the responsibility they have — that we all have — to build and safeguard a future that would make Aaron proud ..."

Large portions of the message were taken from a post by the Electronic Frontier Foundation about Swartz yesterday. The second paragraph, first "wish," and sign-off message in the end were lifted directly from the post.

In their message, Anonymous outlined four wishes: they called for reform of "computer crime laws," reform of "copyright and intellectual property laws," greater recognition for "oppression and injustices," and a commitment to a "free and unfettered internet."

Anonymous is an ill-defined organization of hackers and internet activists. Historically, it has been Anonymous' style to launch denial-of-service, or DoS, attacks to make political statements. Anonymous likely targeted MIT over the Institute's role in the federal government's case against Aaron Swartz, who allegedly used an MIT network connection to download millions of articles from the online repository JSTOR. *The Tech* reported early Saturday morning that Aaron Swartz had died by suicide in his Brooklyn apartment.

MIT has chosen not to reveal any more details about the attack or how Information Services and Technology (IS&T) technicians dealt with it. "We cannot discuss the details of how we approached the attack on Sunday, but we addressed it as quickly as we could and were glad to resolve it," said Christine Fitzgerald, manager of communications for IS&T.

The attack came several hours after President Rafael Reif's message about Swartz to the MIT community was reposted by *The Tech* and other news organizations' websites.

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Anonymous' message also included a link to the online petition to remove U.S. District Attorney Carmen Ortiz, who has been accused by Swartz supporters of using "overreaching charges." As of Tuesday evening, the petition had surpassed 34,000 signatures — over the threshold of 25,000 that requires a White House response.

It is not clear that Sunday's incident was a distributed denial-of-service attack, rather than a garden-variety denial-of-service attack, but no official sources have indicated the attack was a DDoS.

*J. Nathan Matias contributed to the reporting of this article.*

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