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THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE  
NORTHERN DISTRICT *of* OHIO

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**Department of Justice**

U.S. Attorney's Office

Northern District of Ohio

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, May 10, 2018

**Akron man arrested and charged for launching denial of service attacks that shut down web sites for city of Akron and Akron Police Department**

An Akron man was arrested this morning and charged in federal court for launching denial of service attacks that shut down web sites for the city of Akron and the Akron Police Department.

James Robinson, 32, was charged with one count of knowingly causing the transmission of a program, information, code and command, and as a result of such conduct, intentionally causing damage to a protected computer.

According to an affidavit filed in the case:

Servers hosting web sites belonging to the city of Akron were victims of an active distributed denial of service (DDoS) attack on Aug. 1, 2017. Two website domains appeared to be the target of the attacks: akronohio.gov and akroncops.org.

The DDoS attack ultimately overwhelmed the web sites with network traffic and rendered them unavailable to users.

A tweet that same day from @AkronPhoenix420 took credit for targeting the Akron web sites, including a link to a youtube video and a screenshot showing akronohio.gov was not accessible. The tweet included hashtags #Anonymous and #TangoDown.

The video showed a static image of an individual in a Guy Fawkes mask making statements including "it's time we teach the law a lesson," "Akron PD abuses the law" and "this week the city of Akron experienced system failures on multiple domains including their emergency TCP ports."

The subsequent investigation identified attacks coming from an Internet connection registered to James Robinson and that Robinson's phone was associated with the Twitter account @AkronPhoenix420.

@AkronPhoenix420 also claimed credit for many other DDoS attacks including many in 2018 that bore similar characteristics to the Akron attacks. Targets of those attacks web site domains and servers hosted by the Ohio Department of Public Safety, the National Institutes of Health, the Defense Information Security Agency, the Department of Defense, the Department of Treasury and others. Multiple DDoS attacks have been claimed by AkronPhoenix420, including many in 2018.

Law enforcement authorities on May 9 got a search warrant for Robinson's house on Edison Avenue in Akron. Agents located a Guy Fawkes mask and a cell phone with a cracked screen similar to a phone seen in tweets by @AkronPhoenix420. Robinson stated he was responsible for the DDoS attacks against the Department of Defense, city of Akron and others, according to the affidavit.

This case is being investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Defense Criminal Investigative Services, Akron Police Department, Ohio State Highway Patrol, Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Treasury. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Om Kakani and Daniel J. Riedl.

"As evidenced by this individual living in Akron, Ohio, cyber attackers can be anywhere and reach anyone via a computer," said FBI Special Agent in Charge Stephen D. Anthony. "It is imperative that law enforcement and the public join forces to protect ourselves, our institutions, and our businesses. Working together, we must continue to combat and thwart these cyber criminals."

"This defendant illegally shut down government web sites to serve his own agenda," U.S. Attorney Justin E. Herdman said. "We will work with our partners in the private and public sector to help strengthen their cyber defense systems and prosecute those who launch attacks against our community, regardless of their motivation."

"This arrest underscores DCIS resolve and the ongoing joint efforts among international law enforcement to stop cyber criminals. DCIS Special Agents will use every tool at their disposal to hunt down and bring to justice those that attack and endanger the Department of Defense," said Jeffery Thorpe, Special Agent in Charge, Cyber Field Office, Defense Criminal Investigative Service.

"Convenient access to city services and information is essential to the proper functioning of local government," Akron Mayor Dan Horrigan said. "We take any attacks or attempted attacks on our web site seriously, and will continue to do all we can to ensure the perpetrator of this malicious incident is brought to justice."

Akron Police Chief Kenneth Ball said: "The Akron Police Department is very appreciative for the partnerships that were involved in this case. This shows a strong positive resolution by all the public and private partners. Hopefully this sends a strong message to any others that may think they can bully law enforcement."

If convicted, the defendant's sentence will be determined by the court after review of factors unique to this case, including the defendant's prior criminal record, if any, the defendant's role in the offense, and the characteristics of the violation. In all cases, the sentence will not exceed the statutory maximum and in most cases it will be less than the maximum.

A charge is not evidence of guilt. A defendant is entitled to a fair trial, in which it will be the government's burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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**Topic(s):**

Cyber Crime

**Component(s):**

USAO - Ohio, Northern

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