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News Item

Microsoft Says it has Found a Russian Operation Targeting U.S. Political Institutions | The Washington Post

By Elizabeth Dwoskin and Craig Timberg
August 21, 2018

> SAN FRANCISCO — A group affiliated with the Russian government created phony versions of six websites — including some related to public policy and to the U.S. Senate — with the apparent goal of hacking into the computers of people who were tricked into visiting, according to Microsoft, which said Monday night that it discovered and disabled the fake sites.
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> The effort by the notorious APT28 hacking group, which has been publicly linked to a Russian intelligence agency and actively interfered in the 2016 presidential election, underscores the aggressive role that Russian operatives are playing ahead of the midterm elections in the United States. U.S. officials have repeatedly warned that the November vote is a major focus for interference efforts. Microsoft said the sites were created over the past several months and that the company was able to catch them early, as they were being set up. It did not go into more specifics.
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> Microsoft's Digital Crimes Unit, which is responsible for the company's response to email phishing schemes, took the lead role in finding and disabling the sites, and the company is launching an effortto provide expanded cybersecurity protection for campaigns and election agencies that use Microsoft products.
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> Among those targeted were the Hudson Institute, a conservative Washington think tank active in investigations of corruption in Russia, and the International Republican Institute (IRI), a nonprofit group that promotes democracy worldwide. Three other fake sites were crafted to appear as though they were affiliated with the Senate, and one nonpolitical site spoofed Microsoft's own online products.

Source: Microsoft says it has found a Russian operation targeting U.S. political institutions |

The Washington Post