

'Massive' Cyberattack Hits Ukraine Government Websites

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Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy. president.gov.ua

A sweeping cyberattack briefly knocked out key government websites in Ukraine Friday amid high-voltage tensions between Russia and the West over Ukrainian security.

The European Union's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said the bloc was mobilizing "all its resources" to aid its ally after the attacks temporarily brought down sites, including those of the foreign ministry and cabinet.

Kyiv said the damage was limited and held back on apportioning blame but the ex-Soviet country has accused Russians with links to Moscow for previous hits on websites and key infrastructure.

"As a result of a massive cyberattack, the websites of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a number of other government agencies are temporarily down," a foreign ministry spokesman

told AFP.

The foreign ministry website earlier Friday displayed a message in Ukrainian, Russian and Polish warning Ukrainians that their personal data had been compromised.

"All information about you has become public, be afraid and expect the worst," the message read.

The education ministry also said its website had been targeted in a "global" hack overnight while the emergencies ministry site was brought down as well.

Within hours of the initial announcement, the SBU security services said access to most sites had been restored and that the fallout was minimal according to initial estimates.

"The content of sites has not been changed and according to preliminary information no personal data was leaked," the SBU security service said in a statement.

The SBU said access to many of the affected sites had been restored with the remainder to return online "soon."

Kyiv has not yet blamed any individual or entities and Borrell said it was too early "to point the finger at anybody. We don't have proof."

But he added: "You can imagine who did this."

Russian military drills

In October 2020, the United States charged six Russians with carrying out cyber attacks on Ukraine's power grid, the 2017 French elections and the 2018 Winter Olympics.

The Justice Department at the time said the six were current or former members of the GRU Russian military intelligence and were also accused of staging a malware attack called "NotPetya" that infected computers of businesses worldwide causing nearly \$1 billion in losses.

The latest attack came at a time of soaring tensions between Russia and the West over Ukraine, a close ally of the United States and Europe.

The West has accused Russia of deploying tanks, artillery and about 100,000 soldiers on Ukraine's war-torn eastern border in recent weeks, in what NATO says is preparation for an invasion.

Moscow says it has no plans to invade Ukraine.

Footage published by the Russian Defense Ministry Friday showed Russian tanks and infantry carrying out firing drills near the city of Rostov-on-Don in southern Russia near Ukraine.

Moscow says this is a response to what it sees as the growing presence of NATO in its sphere of influence, where it fiercely opposes the expansion of the Atlantic alliance.

Russia also says the U.S.-led military alliance should not admit Ukraine or Georgia as new members.

This week the United States and its NATO allies held talks with Russia in an attempt to ease tensions, but all three rounds of negotiations — in Geneva, Brussels and Vienna — proved unsuccessful.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said Thursday that Moscow saw no reason to hold a new round of security talks with the West following a lack of progress.

Ryabkov also said he did not rule out the possibility that Moscow could deploy forces to allies Venezuela or Cuba if diplomacy failed.

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