

Internet hackers attack Mexican government-related sites

BY HAEJIN SONG
STAFF WRITER

To celebrate Independence Day you might watch fireworks or go out on a picnic, but in Mexico some showed their independence by hacking websites.

According to BBC News, Mexican computer hackers took over at least 10 government-related websites as a political protest on Sept. 16, Mexico's Independence Day.

The hackers call themselves "Ciber Protesta Mexicana," which translates to "Mexican Cyber Protest," and say they are not connected to the international "hactivist" group known as "Anonymous."

"We are not Anonymous and we will never be," reads the statement posted by the hackers. "We are Mexican Cyber Protest. We are not criminals, we are students, workers and productive Mexicans who are fed up and looking for a way to express our disagreement."

The hackers left the defaced pages along with their messages denouncing the Mexican government, particularly concerning President Felipe Calderon. They accuse him of mismanaging the economy, as well as being responsible for the continued violence in Mexico due to the drug war.

The group also criticized its president-elect Enrique Peña Nieto, calling him an "imposed president" and stating that Mexico's democracy was "stolen" in the July election, reported the BBC.

"Why, Mexicans, do you really want to celebrate the independence of Mexico with pride?" asks the group's message, translated into English. "Pride is to have economic stability, good education, access to transparent information with no patches, rights to medical treatment for all ... This is to celebrate Mexico!"

Many are noting the similarities between Mexico's hacks and other recent international hacks.

"A large international community of hackers and cyber warfare or cyber protest, as in the Mexican incident, is commonplace," said Director of IT&S Craig Gray. "Just in February, a group of hackers known as Anonymous attacked U.S. government websites at the FTC to protest the ACTA, the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement."

Assistant Professor of Philosophy Vance Ricks also noted that a group of hackers known as "LulzSec" and

Anonymous targeted some Vatican websites. The group was protesting against what they saw as the Vatican's unacceptable support for priests accused of child molestation."

Gray states the challenge with prevention of hacking is the rapid landscape change and constant state of flux in cyber warfare. He notes that any government or government agency that wants to prevent hijacking is going to spend a large sum on defensive technology.

For many governments and their agencies, cyber security has become one of the top priorities.

Ricks noted, "If what you're asking is, 'How can an agency avoid provoking that sort of attack in the first place?' rather than, 'How can an agency defend itself against such attacks?' then that's an even harder question to answer."

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Teacher's strike blows over after nine days in the windy city

BY JAMES ROWE
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After nine days of striking, the Chicago Teachers Union finally came to an agreement with Mayor Rahm Emanuel over several issues that had been called into question. The teachers cited four concerns: teacher pay, teacher evaluations, the school year end date, and job security.

"We didn't want to strike; we wanted to be heard," said Chicago teacher and member of the teachers' union Jenny Houtsma.

The Chicago Public Schools' teachers earned \$71,236 per year on average as of 2011.

The Chicago Teachers Union and the Board of Education were to have a set teachers' contract in place by June 30, but that did not happen.

The school year began in good faith, but the CTU membership refused to work any longer without the contract. Therefore, the strike began, claimed Houtsma.

The teachers wanted an increase in their pay, along with a new three-year contract. Their request began with the first year of their contract resulting in a three percent increase, followed by a two percent increase in the next two salary cycles. According to their suggested plan, the teachers' contracts would also be extended to a fourth year, should their salaries return to an increase of three percent.

According to CPS Chief Communications Officer Becky Carroll, these raises would average to 17.6 percent over the course of four years, with some potentially receiving raises in the 20 to 30 percent range — especially with a graduate degree or graduate credits.

Junior Caroline Peck, who had been following the strikes, reminds us that the city had made a promise to the teachers.

"Under these circumstances, a promise is a promise," Peck said. "The teachers were working under the assumption that their

work would be rewarded. Then that day came and they weren't given the reward they were promised."

As of 2010, teacher evaluations have shifted and become a direct reflection of student performance on standardized testing. This has brought many objections from teachers who do not consider standardized testing as the best judge of their students' academic progress or success.

Another issue cited by the striking forces is the number of school days required for students. The state of Illinois initially required students to attend school for a total of 176 days a year. CPS teachers are arguing for a 170-day school year, but the district decided to tack on an additional 10 full school days to the education calendar, contradicting the teachers' request in full.

Senior Taylor Sutton, who strives to be a teacher after graduating, said the strikes were completely necessary.

"(The strike conditions) educate the rest of the nation on the importance of teacher treatment and explains why they have been on strike," Sutton said.

Sutton continued, "Moreover, as Americans we recognize the importance of educating our youth; therefore, to treat our educators with a certain amount of fair treatment will lead to a well-taught America and also a more educated future.

"If something like this happened (at Guilford) with the faculty, the students would be right behind them."

When asked if she was pleased with the outcome, Houtsma said, "Yes, I am glad that we were not intimidated by an offer and fought for some important outcomes. It clearly didn't address all the needs, but it addresses the most pressing issues."

"The criticism is unfounded," Houtsma said, referring to the criticism Chicago teachers received during the strike. "All of the time will be made up and no CPS student will be denied a proper education due to the

strike. I do not feel that the school system is responsible for childcare and parenting. That is a choice made by individuals and a school system need not be responsible for that."

There was, however, a lot of strong support from parents and others in the Chicago community, many of whom picketed beside the teachers during the strike.

A statistic shows that 9 out of every 10 Chicago students live in poverty, and there is a significant lack of funding provided for the schools. As a result, Chicago schools struggle to afford the proper tools or staff to make a good education for these students.

Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel tried to make a case to The New York Times stating that the strikes were illegal and that it was

wrong to continue protesting.

Former Chicago resident Brian Gray, agreed with Emanuel. "The teachers had very valid points, but they never should have struck. It was costly to the students and it embarrassed the mayor."

The state of Illinois has regulations in place that both the teachers and the school district worked towards meeting. Unfortunately, despite the assistance of a mediator, that did not happen.

The strike might be finally over, but all the needs that the teachers wanted have yet to be met. Despite that which remains unresolved, the teachers have named the strike a victory due to the new guaranteed contracts and the recognition of their powerful voice.



Chicago teachers were on strike for nine days over pay, security, evaluations and school-year length.