

Iranian hackers sucker punch U.S. defense officials with creative social-media scam

By Cheryl K. Chumley

Published: 2014-05-29 · Archived: 2026-04-05 13:29:15 UTC

Scores of top U.S. defense, foreign policy and senior-level military authorities — including a four-star admiral — have been sucked into a tangled weave of a social-media scam that’s been waged by creative Iranian hackers over the past few years, a new report from a cyber-security firm found.

The Washington Post reported that since 2011, the hackers hit at hundreds of both current and former high-ranking U.S. officials, including a four-star admiral, who worked primarily on non-proliferation issues.

The report, from [iSight](#)Partners, also found that the hackers targeted various personnel from 10-plus different American and Israeli defense contracting companies.

The research firm [iSight](#) dubbed the operation Newscaster and said hackers used social-media sites like Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn to draw their targets and then lure them to check out a bogus news site, NewsOnAir.org, filled with foreign policy and defense articles, The Post reported.

The overall aim is that the social-media platform would give the hackers connections with those at the top of public policy — and position them to tap into that information network.

Specifically, hackers wanted intelligence information that could give insight into U.S. and U.S.-Israeli military operations, as well as nuclear-related discussions between the U.S. and Iran, the Washington Post reported.

“They’re very brash,” Tiffany Jones, the senior vice president for [iSight](#), told The Post. “What they lack in technical sophistication, they make up for in creativity and persistence.”

The research firm couldn’t determine what data the hackers may have stolen. But they did find that the NewsOnAir.org site is registered in Tehran.

“The social networking is so elaborate, they’ve got connections to the highest levels of American policy,” John Hultquist, the head of intelligence on cyber-espionage for [iSight](#), told The Post.

Source: <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/may/29/iranian-hackers-sucker-punch-us-defense-heads-crea/>