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Hackers claim cache of News Corp. e-mails

Could reveal if execs knew of phone hacking

By Byron Acohido
USA TODAY

A group of hackers that has bedeviled companies and governments all summer emerged Thursday as a potentially explosive wild card in the British tabloid scandal.

On Thursday, hacktivist group LulzSec claimed, via **Technology** Twitter postings, to be in possession of a 4-gigabyte cache of archived e-mails stolen from News Corp., the media giant accused of hiring hackers to break into the cell-phone voice mails of murder victims, celebrities and 9/11 victims.

However, with law enforcement stepping up arrests of alleged members of the notorious Anonymous hacking cooperative, LulzSec's leaders indicated they had no plans to publicly post any of the stolen e-mails, at least not yet.

Doing so could further escalate the tabloid scandal, as well as the scrutiny surrounding News Corp. CEO Rupert Murdoch. The e-mails could shed light on whether senior News Corp. executives truly had no knowledge of the voice-mail snooping, as they claim, says Josh Shaul, chief technical officer at Application Security.

LulzSec appears to be sitting "on a treasure trove of e-mails that could have a massive impact on the ongoing investigations of Rupert Murdoch's empire," says Shaul.

The group's leaders indicated they aren't posting the e-mails now because they do not wish to disrupt ongoing investigations of News Corp. by Scotland Yard and the FBI. But fear of getting arrested was likely a factor, security experts say. Authorities this week collared several alleged members of Anonymous in the U.S. and Europe. LulzSec reportedly splintered from Anonymous.

Given the continuing global spotlight on News Corp., hacktivists aren't likely to steer clear of the corporation

for long, says Kurt Baumgartner, senior researcher at Kaspersky Lab. "It's quite possible that more hacktivists will target related Web properties and resources," he says. "The attention is now there."

More revelations about the extent of News Corp.'s hacking for business reasons is likely to stir hacktivists back into action. "This all proves that the corporate world has underinvested and underperformed on security," says Shaul. "Enterprises and governments are just not protecting data right now."

Earlier this week, members of LulzSec ended a self-imposed hiatus to crack into News Corp.-owned newspaper websites *The Sun* and *News International*. LulzSec redirected visitors to *The Sun*'s website to a fake news story about Murdoch's death.

Consumers should make their Web-connected devices and online accounts as secure as they can.

"You need to actively participate," says Chet Wisniewski of anti-virus firm Sophos.