WikiLeaks: US demanding our Twitter account info

RAPHAEL G. SATTER - Associated Press - Associated Press

U.S. officials have issued a subpoena to demand details about WikiLeaks' Twitter account, the group announced Saturday, adding that it suspected other American Internet companies were also being ordered to hand over information about its activities.

In a statement, WikiLeaks said U.S. investigators had gone to the San Francisco-based Twitter Inc. to demand the private messages, contact information and other personal details of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange and other supporters, including the U.S. Army intelligence analyst suspected of handing classified information to the site and a high-profile Icelandic parliamentarian.

WikiLeaks blasted the court order, saying it amounted to harassment.

"If the Iranian government was to attempt to coercively obtain this information from journalists and activists of foreign nations, human rights groups around the world would speak out," Assange said in the statement.

A copy of the court order, dated Dec. 14 and posted to Salon.com, said the information sought was "relevant to an ongoing criminal investigation" and ordered Twitter not to disclose its existence to Assange or any of the others targeted.

The order was unsealed "thanks to legal action by Twitter," WikiLeaks said.

Twitter has declined comment on the claim, saying only that its policy is to notify its users, where possible, of government requests for information.

Others named in the order include Pfc. Bradley Manning, the U.S. Army private suspected of being the source of some of WikiLeaks' material, as well as Birgitta Jonsdottir, an Icelandic lawmaker and one-time WikiLeaks collaborator known for her role in pioneering Iceland's media initiative — which aims to make the North Atlantic island nation a haven for free speech.

The U.S. is also seeking details about Dutch hacker Rop Gonggrijp and U.S. programmer Jacob Appelbaum, both of whom have previously worked with WikiLeaks.

Assange has promised to fight the order, as has Jonsdottir, who said in a Twitter message that she had "no intention to hand my information over willingly." Appelbaum, whose Twitter feed suggested he was traveling in Iceland, said he was apprehensive about returning to the U.S.

"Time to try to enjoy the last of my vacation, I suppose," he tweeted.

Gonggrijp expressed annoyance that court officials had misspelled his last name — and praised Twitter for notifying him and others that the U.S. had subpoenaed his details.

"It appears that Twitter, as a matter of policy, does the right thing in wanting to inform their users when one of these comes in," Gonggrijp said. "Heaven knows how many places have received similar subpoenas and just quietly submitted all they had on me."

WikiLeaks also voiced its suspicion that other organizations, such as Facebook Inc. and Google Inc., had also been served with court orders, and urged them to "unseal any subpoenas they have received."

Google and Facebook's London offices did not immediately return calls seeking comment.

U.S. officials have been deeply angry with WikiLeaks for months, for first releasing tens of thousands of U.S. classified military documents on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, then more recently posting thousands of classified U.S. diplomatic cables. U.S. officials say posting the military documents put informers' lives at risk, and posting diplomatic cables made other countries reluctant to deal with American officials.

Although its relations with the U.S. government have been ugly, WikiLeaks and its tech-savvy staff rely have relied heavily on American Internet and finance companies to raise funds, disseminate material and get their message out.

WikiLeaks' Facebook page, for example, counts 1.5 million fans and its Twitter following is upward of 600,000 followers. Until recently, the group raised donations via PayPal Inc., MasterCard Inc., and Visa Inc., and hosted material on Amazon.com's servers.

But the group's use of American companies has come under increasing pressure as it continues to reveal U.S. secrets.

U.S. officials have been examining possible charges against WikiLeaks and its staff following the series of spectacular leaks, which have embarrassed officials and tarnished Washington's image.

WikiLeaks denies U.S. charges that its postings could put lives at risk, saying that Washington merely is acting out of embarrassment over the revelations contained in the cables.

—

Michael Liedtke in San Francisco contributed to this report.

Source URL (retrieved on *12/09/2013 - 5:03pm*):
http://www.ecnmag.com/news/2011/01/wikileaks-us-demanding-our-twitter-account-info?qt-recent_content=0