

## **Social media editor charged in hacking conspiracy**

PAUL ELIAS and GARANCE BURKE, Associated Press



SAN FRANCISCO (AP) -- A deputy social media editor for Reuters vowed that Friday would be "business as usual" despite charges of conspiring with the notorious hacking group Anonymous to deface an online story of the Los Angeles Times.

Federal authorities allege that in December 2010, Matthew Keys provided hackers with login information to access the computer system of the Tribune Co., the parent company of the Times that also owns a Sacramento television station Keys was

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Published on Electronic Component News (<http://www.ecnmag.com>)

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fired from months before.

Investigators allege that Keys gave a hacker named "Sharpie" the information in an Internet chat room frequented by hackers and urged the hacker to do some damage to the Tribune Co.

According to the indictment, Sharpie altered a Times news story posted Dec. 14 and 15, 2010, to read "Pressure builds in House to elect CHIPPY 1337," a reference to another hacking group. "Chippy 1337" claimed responsibility for defacing the website of video game publisher Eidos in 2011.

Keys' Facebook page says he worked as an online news producer for the Sacramento FOX affiliate KTXL from June 2008 to April 2010.

The news agency Reuters hired Keys in 2012 as a deputy editor for social media and he was at work Thursday. He didn't return a phone call or respond to email messages seeking comment. Reuters spokesman David Girardin said the company was "aware" of the indictment when Keys was hired last year, but he declined further comment.

"I am fine," Keys tweeted Thursday, hours after his federal indictment was announced. "I found out the same way most of you did: From Twitter. Tonight I'm going to take a break. Tomorrow, business as usual."

The indictment alleges that a second attempt to hack the Times was unsuccessful.

Federal prosecutors allege in court papers that a legendary hacker and Anonymous leader named "Sabu" offered advice on how to infiltrate Tribune's systems. The FBI unmasked Sabu when it arrested Hector Xavier Monsegur on June 7, 2011. Monsegur secretly worked as an FBI informant until federal officials announced that he helped them arrest five other alleged hackers on March 6, 2012.

Federal officials declined to comment on whether Sabu assisted in the investigation of Keys.

The day after it was announced that Sabu was an FBI informant, Keys wrote a story for Reuters about "infiltrating" the hackers' chat room.

Keys is charged with one count each of conspiracy to transmit information to damage a protected computer, as well as transmitting and attempting to transmit that information. If convicted, the New Jersey native faces a combined 25 years prison and a \$500,000 fine if sentenced to the maximum for each count.

He is scheduled for arraignment April 12 in Sacramento.

The indictment comes after recent hacks into the computer systems of two other U.S. media companies that own The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal. Both newspapers reported in February that their computer systems had been infiltrated by China-based hackers, likely to monitor media coverage the Chinese

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government deems important.

Anonymous and its offshoot, Lulz Security, have been linked to a number of high-profile computer attacks and crimes, including many that were meant to embarrass governments, federal agencies and corporate giants. They have been connected to attacks that took data from FBI partner organization InfraGard, and they've jammed websites of the CIA and the Public Broadcasting Service.

A computer security specialist said the LA Times attack would be an unusual hack if the government's charges are accurate.

"This is first case where I've heard of someone leaking stuff to Anonymous to have a site defaced, instead of defacing it himself," said Clifford Neuman, director of University of Southern California Center for Computer Systems Security. "He found some way to achieve his ends of defacing the website without having to do it himself."

A spokesman for the Chicago-based Tribune Co. declined to comment.

While Keys did not directly address the federal charges Thursday through his voluminous Twitter feed, commentary from his more than 23,500 followers and even a story about the news indictment were retweeted from his account.

He did not address the issue on his Facebook page, where his last posting Thursday was about the best way to make a grilled cheese sandwich.

According to Keys' Facebook profile, he is single, lives in New York City and works at Thomson Reuters Corp.'s New York office, where "I get paid to use Twitter and Facebook at work."

London-based Reuters has been expanding its business in the United States. This year, six of the Tribune's seven newspapers dropped The Associated Press for Reuters, citing cost savings. The Los Angeles Times stayed with AP.

**Source URL (retrieved on 04/19/2015 - 4:54am):**

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