Cyberattacks Rise as Ukraine Crisis Spills to Internet

By [NICOLE PERLROTH](#) – New York Times, March 4, 2014

The crisis in Ukraine has spread to the Internet, where hackers from both sides are launching large cyberattacks against opposing news organizations.

Security experts say that they are currently witnessing unusually large denial-of-service attacks, also called DDoS attacks, in which hackers flood a website with traffic to knock it offline. The attacks have been directed at both pro-Western and pro-Russian Ukrainian news sites.

In at least one case, hackers successfully defaced the website of the Kremlin-financed news network Russia Today, replacing headlines and articles containing the word "Russia" with the word "nazi."

Experts say the attacks on pro-Western Ukrainian news sites closely resemble the attacks on Chechnyan news sites, which security experts say are under almost constant siege.

Matthew Prince, the chief executive and a co-founder of Cloudflare, a San Francisco company that helps websites speed up performance and mitigate DDoS attacks, said in an interview Tuesday that while this week's attacks were similar to the attacks on Chechnyan news sites that use Cloudflare, it was not clear who was responsible for the attacks.

"I don't think it can be said that these are state-sponsored attacks," Mr. Prince said.

So far, activity has not reached the levels of the cyberattacks directed at Estonia in [a month-long online assault](#) in 2007 that nearly crippled the Baltic nation. Nor have they reached the levels of attacks against Georgia in 2008 when — in the weeks leading up to armed conflict — servers hosting Georgian government, media, communications and transportation websites were knocked offline with a flood of data containing the message, "win+love+in+Rusia."

Security experts said they had also not seen any indication that there had been a drop in traffic coming out of the Ukraine, which is what happened in Syria last year when Syria's [access to the Internet was cut](#) by what appeared to be the country's own government.

While the majority of attacks this week were denial of service attacks, some websites were defaced or breached. Hackers defaced the RT.com site, replacing the word "Russia" with "nazi" which led to a flurry of inaccurate headlines such as: "Putin: Nazi citizens, troops threatened in Ukraine, need armed forces protection."

The word 'nazi' has been increasingly thrown around as tensions escalate in the former Soviet republic. On Tuesday, Ukrainians marched with red flags featuring the banner of the fighter pilots who fought the Nazis in 1941.

Meanwhile, President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, speaking at a news conference Tuesday, described protestors in Kiev as an "orgy" of radicals and nationalists, highlighting a swastika armband he had seen in images of the protests.