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'Cyber Berkut' Hackers Target Major Ukrainian Bank

By The Moscow Times

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Members of the Berkut security forces forming a cordon in central Kiev last November.

In an act of cyber retribution, a group of pro-Russian hackers calling themselves the Kiberberkut have obtained and published customer information stolen from one of Ukraine's largest commercial banks, PrivatBank, a statement on the group's Vkontakte social network page said Friday.

PrivatBank in May became a target for pro-Russian separatists in Eastern Ukraine after the bank suspended its operations in the restive cities of Donetsk and Luhansk, and its co-owner — billionaire Igor Kolomoisky – was appointed head of the nearby Dnipropetrovsk region. One of his first acts as governor of the region was to place a $10,000 bounty on the heads of Russian "saboteurs" fighting in the region.

Kolomoisky even drew the notice of Russian President Vladimir Putin, who called him a "unique imposter" earlier this year, Reuters reported.

Kolomoisky in response described the Russian president as "a schizophrenic, short in stature."

The information published by Kiberberkut – or Cyber Berkut, a reference to the security forces that allegedly fired on anti-Russian Maidan protesters in Kiev in February on the orders of ousted Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych – includes such confidential information as passport data, account information and phone numbers.

Kiberberkut warned PrivatBank customers that their money is at risk and strongly recommended that they transfer their money to any state-owned bank.

"We are Kiberberkut! We will not forget! We will not forgive!" the group said on Vkontakte.

The group explained in a statement that they had analyzed the tactics of another hacking group, Green Dragon, who crippled PrivatBank's website on Monday with a distributed denial-of-service attack. Green Dragon claimed to have gained access to customers' account information, a statement that PrivatBank's press service denied.

"We take pride in responsibility for hacking PrivatBank owned by Kolomoisky who sponsors war campaign in Eastern Ukraine," Green Dragon tweeted in English on Monday.

Kiberberkut claims to have exposed gaps in PrivatBank's cyber security system and posted technical information on their Vkontake page to prove the statement.

On Wednesday, Kiberberkut also published a list of mostly outdated customer information stolen from one of Privatbank's Russian subsidiaries – Moskomprivatbank, Gazeta.ru reported Friday.

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