

# After November 13 - Operation Isis: Anonymous member discusses how group is waging war on the Islamic State

Monday 7 December 2015, by [BORCHERS Callum](#), [FARAND Chloe](#), [GRIFFIN Andrew](#), [HOUSH Gregg](#) (Date first published: 1 December 2015).

**How can a bunch of computer nerds fight an international terrorist group? We find out.**

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Anonymous, the hacker collective known for Guy Fawkes masks and controversial activism, declared war on Isis, following the attacks on Paris on 13 November.

But what does that even mean? How can a bunch of computer nerds fight an international terrorist group?

The Fix put those questions and more to Gregg Housh, one of the most prominent — and one of the only publicly identified — members of Anonymous. Housh is semi-retired from hacking these days. In August, he launched Rebel News, a Massachusetts-based Web site that covers the intersection of hacking and activism (a.k.a. hacktivism). He hangs out in the same corners of the Internet where he helped hatch hacking campaigns like Project Chanology, which targeted the Church of Scientology, but says he is now an observer and not a participant.

Housh has already been to prison, after all, and he doesn't want to go back.

The conversation has been edited for clarity and length.

THE FIX: How is Anonymous waging a war against Isis and how effective can it be? We know they rely heavily on social media.

HOUSH: Everyone loves to say "hacking," but what Anonymous is doing is just tons of research, identifying and monitoring everything out there that ISIS might use to communicate and recruit, and trying to get those channels shut down, be it Twitter accounts, Facebook pages, telegram channels. They're just trying to shut down their ability to talk to the public. I think it's had a decent effect.

One of the things I like about this is anyone can take part. You don't really have to have any hacking skills, and you don't have to break the law to do something here. Just find ISIS talking online and then tell someone about it. And the best part about it is ISIS is trying to have a good social presence and trying to recruit, so it's not like they're hiding.

But one of the problems is someone closely affiliated with what Anonymous used to do, Junaid

[Hussain], kind of taught ISIS everything they know. So both sides have the same toolbox.

THE FIX: Hussain was killed by a U.S. drone strike in Syria in August. Can you mourn the friend you once had while also being happy that the guy he became is dead?

HOUSH: Yeah, that's pretty much it, exactly. It's a guy you know, you've hung out with. But at the same time, he turned pure evil. Finding out that Junaid went down that path really hit me hard. I just couldn't believe one of our own was doing that.

THE FIX: Is the involvement of a former Anonymous hacker indicative of how sophisticated the Isis operation is?

HOUSH: They definitely got a lot of their skill set brought to them by someone who knew what he was doing.

THE FIX: If you report ISIS accounts, and social media companies shut them down, won't they just open others?

HOUSH: Do you know how hard it is to get followers on Twitter? They keep having to reintroduce new accounts. I think shutting down their channels to talk to impressionable youth around the world is a smart move. It definitely creates more work for them. If just a few kids don't get caught up, I'd be happy.

### **Callum Borchers**

\* The Independent. Tuesday 1 December 2015:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gadgets-and-tech/news/operation-isis-anonymous-member-reveals-how-they-are-waging-war-on-the-militant-group-a6752831.html>

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## **Anonymous group takes down Isis website, replaces it with Viagra ad along with message to calm down**

**The site, apparently taken down by a group called Ghost Sec, is part of a new attempt by Isis to make their online propaganda work harder to trace.**

A group associated with Anonymous has hacked into an Isis supporting website, replacing it with a message to calm down alongside an advert for an online pharmacy.

Isis sites have been moving onto the dark web in an attempt not to be discovered. But a hacking group called Ghost Sec, which is related to Anonymous, took the site down and replaced it with a message telling readers that there was "Too Much ISIS".

"Enhance your calm," the full message read. "Too many people are into this ISIS-stuff. Please gaze upon this lovely ad so we can upgrade our infrastructure to give you ISIS content you all so desperately crave."

Before the site was taken down, it was understood to be one of a number of sites that were sharing and copying Isis propaganda so that it could avoid detection and being shut down. Many such

unofficial sites have been created on the dark web, according to security blogger Scot Terban, though a large number of them appear to be unofficial and largely disorganised attempts.

According to some bloggers, Isis supporters have been looking to move their propaganda sites onto the dark web because they are less likely to be discovered and shut down. It is unclear how closely associated the site and the group are, with much of its online activity being done by people who are affiliated with Isis rather than directly associated with the group.

Isis supporters have been attempting to publish sites on the dark web — a part of the internet made up of pages that are not publicly accessible and often require users to be using tools that provide anonymity.

Since the Paris attacks earlier this month, groups associated with Anonymous have renewed their “war” with Isis sympathisers online. Attacks as part of the campaign have included spam attacks and reporting Twitter accounts, as well as more sophisticated hacking.

### **Andrew Griffin**

\* The Independent. Tuesday 27 November 2015:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gadgets-and-tech/news/anonymous-group-takes-down-isis-website-replaces-it-with-viagra-ad-and-message-to-calm-down-a6749486.html>

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## **Anonymous ‘Op Isis’: Isis supporters hit back by publishing set of anti-hack guidelines**

**Isis calls hacking group ‘idiots’ but urges its followers to take precaution in their online activity .**

Apparent Isis supporters have responded to hacking group Anonymous’s threats by publishing a series of basic guidelines to prevent their followers’ Twitter accounts from being hacked.

The pro-Isis accounts hit back at Anonymous’s efforts to name and shame and take down Isis-linked Twitter accounts by calling them “idiots” and urging extremists to follow precaution measures.

The message was sent from the Khilafah News channel and states: “The #Anonymous hackers threatened in new video release that they will carry out a major hack operation on the Islamic state (idiots).”

The online safety guidelines were released in a messaging app called Telegram, which encrypts messages and can destruct them after a certain amount of time.

The five steps instructions are aimed to counter the Anonymous collective’s “biggest ever operation” after it “declared war” on Isis in a video in the wake of the Paris attacks.

It reads (sic):

*Do not open any kind of link unless u r sure from the source*

Use vpn and change ur IP constantly for security reasons. Phones and computers.

Do not talk to people u don't know on Telegram and block them if u have to cause they are many glitches in Telegram and they can hack you by it.

Don't talk to people on Twitter DM cause they can hack u too.

Do not make your #email same as your #username on twitter this mistake cost many Ansar they account and the kuffar published their IP so be careful.

The message was intercepted by the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation in London.

Nick Kaderbhai, a research fellow at the institute told the Huffington Post UK, anyone could subscribe to the Khilafah News channel but "the more IS channels you subscribe to the more open you are to investigation".

The instructions come after the Anonymous group claims to have taken down 800 social media accounts linked to Isis members and has been spamming extremists with memes.

Among the group's strategies is finding out hashtags that are used by Isis and potential recruits and spamming them, so that they become unusable and extremists find it harder to communicate.

Since January and the shootout at the Paris offices of French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo, which killed 17 people, the hacktivists claim to have closed down 149 websites, 101,000 Twitter accounts and 5,900 propaganda videos, according to an investigation by Foreign Policy.

## **Chloe Farand**

\* The Independent. Tuesday 21 November 2015:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gadgets-and-tech/news/anonymous-op-isis-isis-hits-back-by-publishing-sets-of-anti-hack-guidelines-a6743111.html>

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