



SOPA and PIPA anti-piracy bills shelved

A pair of controversial US anti-piracy bills have been shelved following a high-profile online protest.

The Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) and the Protect IP Act (PIPA) drew criticism from web giants including Wikipedia and Google, which complained the copyright protecting provisions would hurt the freedom of the internet.

Wikipedia and a host of other sites shut down for 24 hours on Wednesday 18th January, while Google publicised the pair of bills, asking users to contact their representatives.

The next day, several high-profile politicians pulled back from the bills, and now next week's vote on PIPA has been delayed.

"In light of recent events, I have decided to postpone Tuesday's vote on the Protect IP Act," said Senator Harry Reid.

"There is no reason that the legitimate issues raised by many about this bill cannot be resolved," he added. "We must take action to stop these illegal practices... We made good progress through the discussions we've held in recent days, and I am optimistic that we can reach a compromise in the coming weeks."

SOPA stalled

SOPA was supposed to be discussed in Congress in February, but it too has been delayed, with the House of Representatives saying it would "postpone consideration of the....."

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Tarragon Solutions Ltd

First Floor
Victor House
Barnet Road
London Colney
Herts
AL2 1BJ

Tel: 0800 0199 925

Fax: 0845 1305 807

solutions@tarragon.co.uk

www.tarragon.co.uk

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legislation until there is wider agreement on a solution".

"I have heard from the critics and I take seriously their concerns regarding proposed legislation to address the problem of online piracy," said House Judiciary Committee chairman Lamar Smith. "It is clear that we need to revisit the approach on how best to address the problem of foreign thieves that steal and sell American inventions and products."

Smith stressed that online piracy remained an issue that was "too big to ignore".

"The Committee will continue work with both copyright owners and internet companies to develop proposals that combat online piracy and protect America's intellectual property," he said. "We welcome input from all organisations and individuals who have an honest difference of opinion about how best to address this widespread problem."

Although discussions have stalled the work of the authorities have not...

Megaupload takedown sparks wave of hacktivist attacks

US Government websites and the sites of rights holders have been hit in a tit-for-tat hacking attack following the closure of an alleged copyright infringing website.

The attacks – claimed by hacktivists associated with the Anonymous group – were seen as a response to the closure of megaupload.com over allegations of "widespread copyright infringement".

The denial of service attacks targeted the Department of Justice site, knocking it offline temporarily, as well as

disrupting the FBI's site and those of the Recording Industry Association of America, Universal Music and the Motion Picture Association of America.

"The Department of Justice web server hosting justice.gov is currently experiencing a significant increase in activity, resulting in a degradation in service," a spokesperson for the department told ABC News.

"The department is working to ensure the website is available while we investigate the origins of this activity, which is being treated as a malicious act until we can fully identify the root cause of the disruption."

The hacktivist group Anonymous reported the success of the attacks via its Twitter feed. "The government takes down Megaupload? 15 minutes later #Anonymous takes down Government and record label sites," the group said.

The attacks came shortly after the closure of megaupload.com, which the FBI said had been closed following the arrest of seven people who allegedly made \$175 million via the site.

The FBI said seven individuals and two corporations had been charged in the US with "running an international organised criminal enterprise allegedly responsible for massive worldwide online piracy of numerous types of copyrighted works through Megaupload.com".

The arrests, which the FBI said involved working with law enforcement colleagues from New Zealand, Germany and Hong Kong, were described as "one of the largest criminal copyright cases ever brought by the United States" although the agency gave no technical details on how the site had been taken offline.

The SOPA & PIPA situation will need to be monitored carefully as what gets applied over the pond could easily be applied here by our own government.

