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**Hacking**

## Sony hack would have challenged government defences – FBI

Cyber division chief tells Congress that malware attack would have breached 90% of defences, including government



Sony Pictures hack with suggested links to North Korea over the Interview would have challenged government security, the FBI has said. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

**Samuel Gibbs**  
Friday 12 December 2014 05.56 EST

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The cyberattack that crippled [Sony Pictures](#), led to theft of confidential data and leak of movies on the internet would have challenged almost any cyber security measures, the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has said.

The FBI's investigation into the attack has found that the level of sophistication of the software used by the hackers was "extremely high" and that the attacks were "organised and certainly persistent."

"In speaking with [Sony](#) and separately, the Mandiant security provider, the malware that was used would have slipped or probably got past 90% of internet defences that are out there today in private industry and [would have] challenged even state government," Joseph Demarest, assistant director of the FBI's cyber division told a US Senate hearing.

**'We're still working very hard on that'**

While security analysts have said that preventing sophisticated and well-funded cyber criminals from breaking into a company is very hard indeed, researchers have criticised Sony Pictures for its poor data security, which allegedly saw login details stored in unencrypted spreadsheets.

But Demarest wouldn't be drawn on who carried out the attacks. "I won't touch on the attribution piece because we're still working very hard on that," he said.

The [FBI](#) assistant director explained that the skills necessary to carry out the attack were not limited to government-funded units and that cyber criminals also have the level of sophistication needed.

A hacking group calling itself Guardians of Peace (Gop) claimed responsibility for the hack on 24 November.

A link between Gop and [North Korea](#) has been muted over Pyongyang's reaction to the Sony Pictures film *The Interview*, which depicts an assassination attempt on Kim Jong-un.

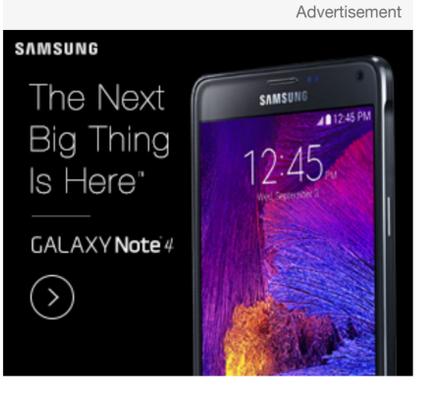
North Korea [denied involvement](#), despite calling it a "righteous deed", but some security researchers are convinced that the attacks carry the hallmarks of a state-sponsored assault.

The [FBI](#) [poured doubt](#) on links with North Korea saying that there was "no attribution" to Pyongyang.

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**SoResurgent** 5d ago 5 ↑  
The high level of sophistication can't be an excuse for Sony - they have had two incidents in the past. Every next case simply shows they are not taking this seriously. Which is likely to be quite bad about them. The implications of the case are imminent and the full scale is going to be revealed in the next months or year.

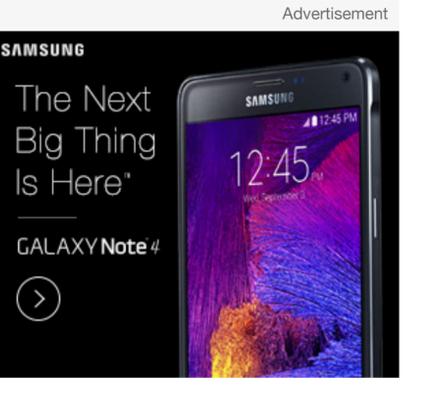
**Nicolas Gautier** 5d ago 4 ↑  
I'd say be thankful it's not North Korea because if the hack can get past 90% of cyber defenses, they wouldn't limit themselves to movie studios.

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