

Websites in Mississippi hit by denial-of-service attack as country votes during midterm elections

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Some Mississippi state websites were briefly knocked offline Tuesday after so-called distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks as voters

turned out at polling sites across the state and the country.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security officials stressed that such [attacks](#), which flood websites with computer messages, would not affect actual vote totals. The two U.S. cybersecurity officials spoke on condition of anonymity late Tuesday to discuss ongoing operations.

The two officials with the DHS's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency said there was no specific or credible threat disrupting election infrastructure or any activity that should cause voters to question the integrity of the election.

Mississippi officials confirmed the "abnormally large increase in traffic volume" from the DDoS activity, which led to some of its websites being "periodically inaccessible" Tuesday afternoon.

"We want to be clear and (reassure) Mississippians our election system is secure and has not been compromised," the Mississippi Secretary of State's Office said in a statement.

A Russian hacker group claimed in a Telegram post Tuesday that it was targeting the Mississippi Secretary of State Office's [website](#) to "hit the section that is directly related to the elections," according to a review of the Telegram account by U.S. TODAY.

The hacker group also claimed it would "attack American Democrats as a gift to the Republicans for the elections," and its first target would be the Democratic National Committee.

According to a website that checks server downtime, the DNC website was last down at some point on Tuesday, but it's unclear exactly what caused the outage or how long it lasted. Websites can routinely go down for all sorts of non-nefarious reasons. A DNC spokesperson did not

immediately respond to a request for comment.

Though it can be complicated to identify who is behind such attacks, the DHS officials said they had seen no evidence suggesting the attacks were part of any widespread or coordinated campaign. One of the officials said that while they are aware of a Russian hacker group claiming responsibility for the attacks on Mississippi, the U.S. government requires more evidence to attribute such attacks.

The DHS officials chalked up problems in individual [election](#) jurisdictions, including Maricopa County, Arizona, to routine Election Day glitches.

Elizabeth Holbert Jonson, a spokeswoman with the Mississippi Secretary of State's Office, said late Tuesday that the websites hit by the attack solely provided external content to voters but did not involve any internal elections-related processes. Jonson said she was aware of the [news reports](#) on the Russian [hacker group](#)'s claims but did not immediately have information on the credibility of its claims.

"We do not have confirmation as to where the DDoS activity originated," Jonson told U.S. TODAY.

The apparent cyberattacks came one day after Yevgeny Prigozhin, a wealthy Russian businessman and top confidant of Vladimir Putin, allegedly claimed on Telegram that the Kremlin intentionally had meddled in U.S. elections in an attempt to subvert American democracy. The man commonly referred to as "Putin's chef" suggested that the Kremlin would continue to interfere in the U.S. democratic process.

"We interfered, we interfere and we will interfere," Prigozhin said.

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