



<http://www.fox5ny.com>

## How the Mirai botnet attack is linked to a Minecraft stunt



By: [JOE TOOHEY](mailto:?body=http://www.fox5ny.com/news/mirai-botnet-attack-minecraft-stunt) (<mailto:?body=http://www.fox5ny.com/news/mirai-botnet-attack-minecraft-stunt>)

POSTED: JAN 03 2018 10:46PM EST

VIDEO POSTED: JAN 03 2018 10:52PM EST

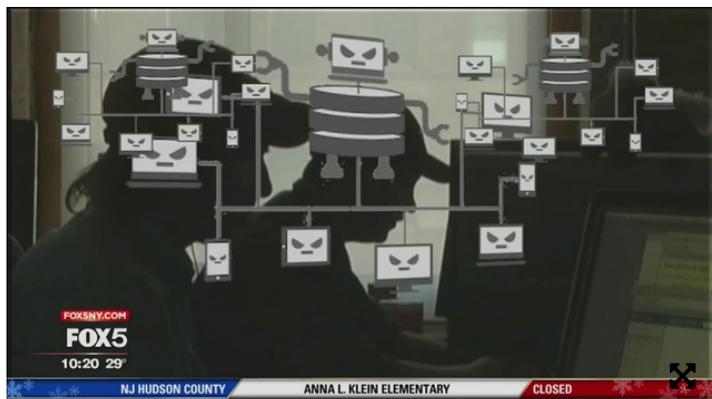
UPDATED: JAN 03 2018 10:55PM EST

**NEW YORK (FOX5NY.COM)** - In October 2016, the internet was almost brought to a screeching halt. Twitter, Netflix, Amazon and other websites were knocked down thanks to a sophisticated cyber-attack on the American tech firm Dyn. At the time, there were fears it could be the opening shots in a new cyber war.

The culprit was a massive cyber weapon known as the Mirai botnet, a hacking tool more powerful than the world had ever seen.

But it wasn't the brain child of a rogue nation like North Korea, Iran, or Russia. It was three American guys in their early 20s who wrote the original code in an attempt to get an edge in Minecraft, a hugely popular video game with 55 million players each month.

The game has no real objective. Users create whole worlds with virtual blocks. Providing the servers and security for those digital realities has become big business—in some cases worth tens of thousands of dollars a month.



Adam Levin is the chairman of Cyberscout and author of the book *Swiped*. He said this was about money and bragging rights.

The three Minecraft musketeers all pleaded guilty to cybercrimes in December. One of them—Paras Jha—is from New Jersey. He mounted similar attacks on school servers while he was a student at Rutgers University.

The way they did it is through something called a botnet—basically taking control of unsecured smart home devices like cameras and TVs and using them to create something of a robot army that overwhelmed servers and knocked out websites.

The October 2016 Mirai attack on Dyn—the one that knocked out East Coast internet and temporarily crippled Netflix, Twitter, and other companies—wasn't launched by the three men who plead guilty. But by creating Mirai, they did let the proverbial tiger out of the cage. In fact, over a six-month period Mirai was reportedly responsible for more than 15,000 different attacks.

Levin said this is going to get worse, not better.

In a statement, lawyers for Jha told Fox 5 in part, "Paras Jha is a brilliant young man whose intellect and technical skills far exceeded his emotional maturity. ... He has pled to charges here in the District of New Jersey, and in the District of Alaska, as the first step in his evolution into adulthood and responsibility."

The makers of Minecraft declined to comment for this story.

With the cyber war replacing the cold war and digital gamers being able to take down real world companies. The Mirai botnet is a powerful reminder that the things people do online can have major consequences when they log off.