



Cyber 9/12 Strategy Challenge

Intelligence Report I

INSTRUCTIONS

Please read these instructions carefully. They have changed from previous years.

Your team will take on the role of experienced policy advisers, part of a hypothetical cybersecurity task force, preparing to brief the National Security Council (NSC). This packet contains fictional information on the background and current situation involving a major cyber incident affecting US systems. The attacks notionally take place in Spring 2021 in a world where the **SolarWinds compromise never occurred**. The scenario presents a fictional account of political developments and public reporting surrounding the cyber incident.

The NSC needs information on the full range of response options available regarding this incident. Your team has been tasked with developing an appropriate course of action for recommending to the NSC.

You are to consider as facts the following pages for formulating your response.

You will use the fictional scenario material presented to perform three tasks:

Written Situation Assessment and Policy Brief: Your first task is to write an analytical policy brief that provides a concise assessment of the situation, addresses potential impacts and risks, and discusses the implications of the cyber incident. Describe policy considerations for different potential state and non-state actors. Be clear regarding the advantages and disadvantages of various policy options and explore the course of action you are recommending in depth. The length of the brief is limited to two single-sided pages.

It is due no later than **Friday**, **February 26**, **2021 at 5:00 p.m.** (**EST**). Please submit your written policy brief to Emma Schroeder @atlanticcouncil.org with the subject line: **Team Name**> **Written Brief Submission** – **Cyber 9/12**.

Oral Policy Brief (Day 1): For the first day of the competition, prepare a ten-minute oral presentation outlining your impact and risk assessment, as well as your suggested course of action. You will present to a panel of judges playing the role of the NSC.

Decision Document (Day 1): Teams will also be required to submit a "decision document" accompanying their oral presentation at the beginning of the competition round. The "decision document"

will be a maximum of one single-sided page in length, outlining the team's response options, decision process, and recommendations. The teams should note that the document is not intended to summarize every detail of the recommendations, but to help the judges follow the oral presentation, and the judges will be given only 2 minutes to read it before the presentation begins. The document should be written with the goal of assisting busy senior officials to quickly grasp your team's recommendations and analysis.

Keep these tips in mind as you are reading and considering your policy response alternatives:

- Analyze the issues. The goal of the competition is for competitors to grapple with complex issues and weigh the strengths and weaknesses of potentially conflicting interests. Priority should be given to analysis of the issues and not to listing all possible issues or solutions.
- Engage the scenario. Believe that the universe we have created is plausible and that the events that happen in it are realistic. Nevertheless, remember to think critically about the intelligence you have been provided and its provenance.
- Think multi-dimensionally. When analyzing the scenario, remember to consider implications for other organizations and domains (e.g. private sector, military, law enforcement, different levels of government, diplomatic) and incorporate these insights along with cybersecurity.
- Consider who you are, and who you're briefing. You are experienced cyber policy professionals
 briefing the National Security Council. As such, you should be ready to answer questions on
 agency responsibility, provide justifications for your recommendations, and have potential
 alternatives ready.
- *Be creative*. Cyber policy is an evolving discourse, and there is no single correct course of action to the scenario information provided. There are many ideas to experiment with in responding to the crisis.
- *Don't fight the scenario*. Unless stated otherwise, assume all inter-state relations, policies, and treaties have remained the same as they were in February 2021. Explore the implications of that information, not the plausibility. **The only exception to this is that in this scenario, students should work with the assumption that the SolarWinds hack never occurred.**

Given the unclear nature of the threat, the NSC requests that your team prepare a concise assessment of the ongoing situation and reporting. Your assessment should include:

- How or where the relevant systems could be vulnerable to exploit, and what steps can be made to mitigate these vulnerabilities;
- An assessment of potential risks and impacts to consider if the vulnerabilities are successfully exploited; and
- Responses the NSC can or should consider addressing these vulnerabilities, taking into account the severity and likelihood of the threat.

To provide this assessment and policy recommendations, you will apply your understanding of the technologies involved, cybersecurity, law, foreign policy, international relations, and security theory to synthesize useful policy measures from limited information. Your recommendation must analyze the possible strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of your proposed response.

In formulating your response, you will be expected to have considered, at a minimum:

- All stakeholders when determining an action or recommendation, including the role of the government and private sector;
- The long and short-term impacts of your recommendation;
- Which agency will be responsible for the action you have recommended;
- Appropriate recommendations for local vs. federal government;
- Whether you can, or should, attribute the threat; and
- The covert or overt nature of your response.

Additionally, this message is accompanied by several documents that may assist your team in preparing the assessment and policy brief for the NSC:

- **Tab 1** DarkNode Forum Thread
- **Tab 2** CIA Surveillance Record
- **Tab 3** Port Operator Email Chain
- **Tab 4** Washington Post Article
- **Tab 5** Rabinara Group Report
- **Tab 6** Internal FBI Memo
- **Tab 7** Premium Times News Article
- **Tab 8** Tweets

Tab 1 - DarkNode Forum Thread

Intelligence Packet: NSA Market Monitor Program ID #103012205

| Threat Level | Moderate (2/5) |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Admiralty Code | C4 |
| Event Date | 17 May 2020 |
| Source | DarkNode "Cash L4b" Forum |
| Threat Actor (TA) | Manticore, 1881 Colectiv |
| TA's Language | English |
| Targeted Geography | Iran, Romania |
| Analysts | Alex Turner |

Key Points

1. Abstract: During routine network monitoring, analysts came across an English language thread on a dark web forum, DarkNode, hosted in the Asia-Pacific. The thread linked to coordination between Manticore, an Iranian state-sponsored APT, and 1881 Colectiv, a Romanian organized cyber-criminal group. An operative representing Manticore notified its 1881 Colectiv counterpart of a malware payload to enable the modification of bills of lading and container tags in TidalWaves, a cargo management software used by port facilities and shipping operators.

1881 Colectiv operative is instructed by the Manticore operative to install ransomware onto key port systems to camouflage the data manipulation of bills of lading and container tags. The Manticore operative assures its counterpart that there is an opportunity for financial gain in this operation.

This thread might provide insight into Manticore and 1881 Colectiv's future joint operations.

- 2. Audience: U.S. law enforcement agencies, U.S. and international intelligence agencies.
- 3. Source and Validation: DarkNode has a mixed record of providing actionable information. It has been used as a marketplace for malware and credit card information before, and it has hosted forums used to coordinate illegal online activity. However, it is also a popular

anonymous message board for privacy minded internet users and has hosted discussions from 1881 Colectiv in the past, often focused on stolen credit card credentials and identity theft.

- 4. Mitigation Summary: We suggest increased monitoring of known Manticore and 1881 Colectiv networks and malware marketplaces to identify targeting or active exploitation of port and maritime infrastructure.
- 5. IOCs and Attachments: No Relevant IOCs were found.

Source Report: Text of DarkNode forum discussion

1. TA's post on 17 March 2021:

17/03/2021 0413EST

huma79> are you there?

zmeu00> of course

huma79> i have some good news. we've developed a way to edit port bills and tags on

huma79> could be useful in rerouting goods

zmeu00> aiurea! are you serious?

huma79> you know i don't joke

huma79> could you all assist in covering the edits?

17/03/2021 0438EST

zmeu00> i think so. we could arrange for operators to be barred access

zmeu00> of course that would require compensation

huma79> oh there's potential for that

Tab 2 - CIA Field Record



SUSPECT: KLAW aka Kian Ahmadi

AFFILIATION: Speculated affiliation with MANTICORE and Iranian

state-backed cyber espionage group.

LAST SIGHTING: Krakow, Poland on 10/23/2020.

OPERATOR NOTES: Identified MANTICORE members are speculated to communicate using in-game chat features in a popular MMO videogame.

| User | Message |
|---------|--|
| Klaw | <klaw by="" channel="" has="" invitation="" joined="" the=""></klaw> |
| Stinger | Kian is here, we can start the game |
| Sher | Why are we not using VC? |
| Stinger | Nets too slow for VC |
| Klaw | Bishoor! Its klaw |
| Fang | Who made the mistake? |
| Sher | Klaw has the report |
| Klaw | Someone tried to activate 2FA |
| Klaw | They started looking for us on network |
| Fang | Have they discovered us? |
| Sher | No |
| Sher | They've been looking for weeks. They don't realize that we're in their code |
| Fang | Klaw how could you be this reckless? |
| Sher | We have had incredible success jenaab – from BitHub till now no one has caught on |
| Fang | Yes. A year of diligent work in honor of Suleimani wasted |
| Fang | Are the other pieces in place? |
| Klaw | Yes. This was a secondary target. They had stronger protections |
| Fang | Stronger than PoH? |
| Klaw | PoH had some external protections. Internally? It was super easy, barely an inconvenience to |
| | compromise the whole system |
| Sher | Klaws genius was infecting TWs BitHub. From that success TW gave us access to |
| | everything |
| Stinger | And from everything weve gone to everywhere jenaab. TW is in so many systems, so many |
| | ports, even they don't realize. |
| Stinger | We have been in hundreds of port systems and have been hard at work with the others |
| Fang | Until Klaws idiot |
| Klaw | Jenaab, He knows his mistake. He was one of the 1881 and has been cut out |
| Sher | Jenaab we knew this was likely when we brought in others. Perhaps the risk was not worth it |
| Sher | Spoils are already arriving at home, they suspect nothing. This will be a victory that |
| | Suleimani would be proud of |
| Fang | We aimed beyond their ships and ports. |
| Stinger | Why? We will steal and cripple their trade – lets see how they like it |
| Fang | You are right. This was to teach them the pain they gave us |
| Stinger | Jenaab, we should launch the last update |
| Klaw | There's another update? |
| Fang | Yes, our friends are arranging it. Not your team. |
| Sher | Stinger stop requesting items from me |
| | |

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| Fang | S – bia berim get them ready. K – you'll be informed of when to start the attack | |
|---------|--|--|
| Stinger | Closing lobby and DCing | |

// Recorded on 2/26/2021 //

Tab 3 – Port Operator Email Chain

From: Samantha Gaffer

Sent: Monday, March 8, 2021 at 10:36 a.m.

To: Rose Barleyman

Subject: Possible data degradation

Hi Rose,

I hope you had a nice weekend.

I am reaching out because I noticed some irregularities in our tracking data. I have received a substantial number of emails in the past couple of weeks from distributors complaining that portions of their shipments have failed to be delivered.

This number of failed deliveries suggests that there is likely an error in our tracking data. I have attached these specific complaints, could you look into this problem and compare it to our existing tracking data?

Sincerely, Sam

Samantha Gaffer

Head, Customer Relations
Port of Houston
Samantha.Gaffer@PortHouston.com

From: Rose Barleyman

Sent: Monday, March 8, 2021 at 12:17 p.m.

To: Samantha Gaffer

Cc: Ted Sandyman; Fred Bolger

Subject: Re: Possible data degradation

Hi Sam,

Thanks for flagging this for me, as you mentioned our database shows these specific shipments as complete.

I have passed this along to two of my colleagues, who will be looking into the situation on the ground.

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Ta, Rose

Rose Barleyman

Director of Operations
Port of Houston
Rose.Barleyman@PortHouston.com

From: Rose Barleyman

Sent: Monday, March 8, 2021 at 12:26 p.m.

To: Bob Sandyman; Donna Bolger **Subject**: Fw: Possible data degradation

Hi Bob and Donna,

Samantha Gaffer emailed me regarding possible irregularities in our tracking data. We have received a significant number of complaints and I worry that this may point to a systemic problem.

I have done some initial research and our data conflicts with the statements of several of our distributors, who claim that their shipments never arrived.

Please look into this.

Ta, Rose

Rose Barleyman

Director of Operations
Port of Houston
Rose.Barleyman@PortHouston.com

-BEGIN FORWARDED EMAIL-

From: Samantha Gaffer

Sent: Monday, March 8, 2021 at 10:36 a.m.

To: Rose Barleyman

Subject: Possible data degradation

•••

From: Donna Bolger

Sent: Monday, March 8, 2021 at 7:26 p.m.

To: Rose Barleyman CC: Bob Sandyman

Subject: Fw: Possible data degradation

Hi Rose,

Thank you for sending over the complete list of alleged mismatches in our data.

Bob is looking into data tracking software to trace activity on the dates in question to determine what the cause of these irregularities might be.

We have also evaluated the alleged contents of the disputed shipments to determine if there was a pattern to the missing data. The missing items cover a wide range, from oil refinery equipment to food.

I will keep you updated as our evaluation continues.

Best, Donna

Tab 4 – Washington Post Article



National Security

Foreign Policy

Justice

Military

Biden Sanctions Iran After Nuclear Negotiations Fail



By Omar Rahman

Mar. 16, 2021 at 11:15 EST

Negotiations between Tehran and Washington came to a halt after the Rouhani regime decided to continue their nuclear enrichment efforts. Iranian leadership claims the US is too untrustworthy to commit to a new joint agreement limiting enrichment, to which the US responded to by reinstating sanctions.

After oscillating expectations on nuclear compliance from the Obama, Trump, and now Biden Administrations, Iran refused to reenter commitments with the US that could be dismantled by a subsequent presidential administration. In 2015 the Obama Administration successfully implemented the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), better known as the Iran Nuclear Deal, which aimed to limit enrichment, increase international oversight, and slow the development of Iran's nuclear capabilities. In exchange for complete compliance, the United Nations, European Union, and US agreed to lift sanctions on Tehran.



In 2018, the US unilaterally left the JCPOA and reinstated sanctions due to Iran's violations of the agreement. Following the 2020 Presidential election, President Biden discussed creating a new nuclear framework with Iran but pledged that national security would remain the highest priority.

Top national security officials are unsurprised by the stalemate. During January 2021's confirmation hearings, Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Secretary of Defense Gen. Lloyd Austin, and Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines all affirmed Iran was far from compliance with the standards set in 2015. They insisted any nuclear deal would depend on the Iranian regime's strict adherence to the former JCPOA's requirements.

Unfortunately, the nuclear enrichment is only one source of tension between Iran and the US. More than a year ago, a US air strike killed top Iranian General Qasem Soleimani as part of the Trump Administration's maximum pressure campaign. Enraged, Iran swore revenge, and analysts say Tehran is still contemplating its response. Recently, a Twitter account connected to the Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was banned for posting a video that appeared to portray former President Trump being killed in an air strike.

The looming threat was accompanied by cyber campaigns intending to disrupt the 2020 US Presidential election. Iranian hackers allegedly published a hit list of US election officials, hoping to intimidate election officials and deter them from working at the polls. If history is any indication, President Biden's Administration can anticipate more Iranian cyber campaigns against the US like those seen in 2015. Without a doubt, US relations with Iran will continue to be shaped by former President Trump's actions.

Another wave of sanctions, a failed nuclear deal, and impending retaliation do not mix well. Iran will remain a top priority for the Biden Administration as they balance maintaining pressure without pushing Iran to a red line.

Tab 5 – Rabinara Group Report



MEMBER ALERT: COORDINATED PORT RANSOMWARE

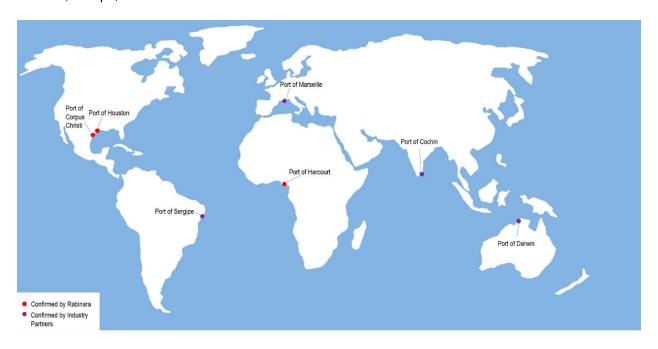
19-Mar-2021

Hello <

Rabinara Group has confirmed ongoing ransomware attacks in the Port of Houston, USA; Port of Corpus Christi, USA and Port of Harcourt, Nigeria.

Rabinara Group amongst its list of services offers expertise in handling maritime cyber incidents. Rabinara Group was first contacted on March 19, 2021 by Port of Houston and Port of Corpus Christi, within minutes of each other and was contacted by Port of Harcourt an hour later.

Rabinara Group's industry partners have reported ongoing campaigns in at least 4 additional ports in South America, Europe, Asia and Australia.



Digital Forensics and Incident Response teams have only just begun their work. Rabinara Group looks to provide its members with 24/7 alerts on issues what we have **confidence** in, which is why you are receiving this alert.

Threat actor

The BASKERVILLE ransomware deployed in affected targets is a known ransomware attributed to the 1881 Colectiv, a ransomware crew that operates out of Romania. Rabinara Group has tracked their activity before and has advised clients on how to prevent exploitation.

Impact

Initial findings from our Austin team that was deployed to the Port of Houston confirmed that BASKERVILLE has compromised entire port systems most critically, email services and cargo manifest systems – including digital backups. Other impacted systems include access management software preventing easy access to secure facilities and gated areas.

Port Traffic Control, Gantry and Trolly systems remain online and active, allowing vessels to berth.

Cargo cannot be unloaded due to the ransomware that has impacted the cargo manifest systems.

Implications

Rabinara Group has long advocated for stronger cybersecurity at ports and across maritime systems. Maritime commerce accounts for 90% of all global trade tonnage, yet these systems continue to remain woefully open to exploitation and are hamstrung by poor network segmentation and cybersecurity practices allowing adversaries widespread access to port systems.

Due to these systemic vulnerabilities, Rabinara Group cannot confidently account the degree of damage and is committed to providing both a determination on the origin of this breach, as well as securing our client systems from further exploitation.

The Rabinara Group will continue working round the clock to resolve this situation for our clients in the US and internationally.

Best, Jose Mancia Co-Founder, Rabinara Group



Rabinara Group 770 Broadway, New York, NY 10003 Gold Award, Threat Intel | Fortune 500 Clients | Exceptional People, Exceptional Results

Tab 6 – Internal FBI Memo

TOP SECRET// HCS-O// REL TO USA FVEY//



TO: CHRISTOPHER GALLAGHER, DIRECTOR

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION,

WASHINGTON DC

DATE: MAR 23 2021

FROM: ESTE KARO, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, CYBER DIVISION

CRIMINAL, CYBER, RESPONSE, AND SERVICES BRANCH

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

WASHINGTON DC

RE: INTERPOL ARRESTS '1881 COLECTIV' MEMBER

TS//HCS-O//OC/REL TO USA, FVEY

(U//FOUO) INTELLIGENCE PURPOSES ONLY: (U//FOUO) The information in this report is provided for intelligence purposes only but may be used to develop potential investigative leads. No information contained in this report, nor any information derived therefrom, may be used in any proceeding (whether criminal or civil), to include any trial, hearing, or other proceeding before any court, department, agency, regulatory body, or other authority of the United States without the advance approval of the Attorney General and/or the agency or department that originated the information contained in this report. These restrictions apply to any information extracted from this document and used in derivative publications or briefings.

(TS//FVEY) The purpose of this memorandum is to advise you of a recent arrest of Mihai Iordan (SUBJECT) made by Interpol in Romania. SUBJECT was identified as a key member of the Romanian cyber-criminal group 1881 Colectiv by an international intelligence database. Information gathered from SUBJECT throughout questioning suggests SUBJECT may be connected to a recent pattern of short selling of shipping and petroleum companies flagged by the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). Suspecting criminal activity based on the persistent and targeted nature of this activity, the SEC notified FBI White Collar Crime Division of these activities. In coordination with the SEC, FBI Cyber Division launched an investigation into the alleged criminal activity.

(TS//FVEY) SUBJECT was arrested by Romanian police on FEB 27 2021 on charges of drunk and disorderly conduct. INTERPOL flagged his arrest and connected him to a series of ransomware attacks against Romanian and Hungarian healthcare facilities in 2019/2020, which were tied to the Romanian cyber-crime group 1881 Colectiv. SUBJECT was then transferred to the custody of INTERPOL in Romania.

(S// FVEY) Due to SUBJECT's work with 1881 Colectiv, INTERPOL, in coordination with Romanian Police, detained and charged SUBJECT for conspiracy to commit wire fraud, illegal access to information systems and illegal system interference in connection with recent ransomware attacks.

(S//FVEY) While questioning SUBJECT, officers leveraged their knowledge of his activities relating to the ransomware cases to press for information regarding 1881 Colectiv. SUBJECT implied he had valuable information regarding the current workings of 1881 Colectiv and would pass on this information in exchange for a significantly reduced punishment in a minimum-security prison. Law enforcement agreed to a deal depending on the value of SUBJECT's information.

(TS// FVEY) Under further interrogation, SUBJECT confessed "a recent mistake" terminated his work with 1881 Colectiv, but swore he had information on "game-changing developments" 1881 Colectiv is involved in. SUBJECT boasted of his role in executing BASKERVILLE but promised "the worst was yet to come."

(TS// FVEY) INTERPOL learned 1881 Colectiv was actively shorting shipping and petroleum company stocks by orders from anonymous partners and cutouts. Stock manipulation followed by BASKERVILLE attacks on the same companies, earned 1881 Colectiv millions. SUBJECT expressed medium confidence a small portion of those profits were transferred to their anonymous partner. INTERPOL attributes stock manipulation to odd bribery efforts.

(S//FVEY) INTERPOL officers immediately investigated the validity of these claims and found a pattern of suspicious trading and ransomware attacks against these sectors across the globe in the previous weeks, matching SUBJECT's statement. Several of the companies targeted are based in or operate within the United States, thus the full report, including the complete Interpol and Romanian police files on 1881 Colectiv and SUBJECT's full statement, was sent to the FBI Cyber Division.

(S//FVEY) FBI Cyber Division launched an investigation into SUBJECT's claims and the intelligence provided by our INTERPOL partners. FBI Cyber Division is also in close coordination with contacts at the SEC in the ongoing investigation of suspicious trading patterns. FBI Cyber Division will provide updates as the investigation continues and welcomes all feedback and direction.

CLASSIFIED UNTIL: MAR 23, 2071

TOP SECRET// HCS-O// REL TO USA. FVEY//



Ransomware Campaign Spells Trouble in Port Harcourt



f 💆 🗘 🗗 🚍 🕏

A ransomware attack has brought operations in Port Harcourt and other ports around the world to a standstill.

By Omolola Boafo- March 25, 2021 4 min read

On March 19, operators in the Port of Harcourt detected unusual activity on port networks. At Port Harcourt, basic operations can be difficult on a normal day, the last thing port operators and managers needed was ransomware attack.

Since then, energy exports have been most immediately impacted. The Ministry of Energy predicts this cyberattack may result in a regional energy crisis as Port Harcourt's two refineries have a combined capacity of 210,000 barrels per day.

"While port operations have come to a standstill, Port Harcourt's IT and Security teams are hard at work responding to the incident," said Executive Director of the Port of Harcourt, Nigella Adewunmi. "Staff are working around the clock to resume port operations and alleviate congestion along the Bonny River."

To complicate matters further, tens of millions of metric tons of food aid from the USAID Food for Peace program is received through Port Harcourt. This aid ensures that some 1.8 million Nigerians displaced by Boko Haram in the Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states can have meet their daily food needs.

"Northeastern Nigeria has been gripped by conflict for over a decade now," says Alison Mosshart, spokesperson for USAID's Office of Food for Peace (FFP). "This conflict has displaced Nigerians and ravaged their livelihoods as well. USAID's FFP offers life-saving assistance to millions. Any delays will be felt immediately by those who are the most vulnerable in Nigeria.

Delays in food shipments will result in millions of Nigerians experiencing acute food insecurity, especially in regions already experiencing violence and instability at the hands of Boko Haram.

Tab 8 – Tweets



Management System with "clients in every country were ships carry cargo," was compromised by a potentially devastating cyber-attack. Officials are still scrambling to recover from large ransomware attack on Texas and Nigerian Ports earlier...

8:38 AM · Mar 23, 2021



(2/3) ...this month. Port workers are searching for missing cargo impacted by the attack. TidalWaves attackers are unknown, but many customers, including government agencies, are likely compromised. Cybersecurity experts believe this is a supply chain attack and intruders have...

8:39 AM · Mar 23, 2021





(3/3)...been in the system for months, slowly expanding access. Full extent of infiltration is unclear but the attack could impact customers worldwide. A senior CISA official confirmed TidalWaves breach is responsible for shipment issues at US and Nigerian Ports.



Despite the attacker's best efforts, attacks on the Port of Houston were unsuccessful. I personally visited the Marina today and can confirm all boats, including mine, are undamaged! We are #HoustonStrong.





TIDAL is NOT AFFILATED with TidalWaves or the recent cyber-attacks. Our unlimited music and videos are safe for streaming right now!

5:56 PM · Mar 26, 2021

