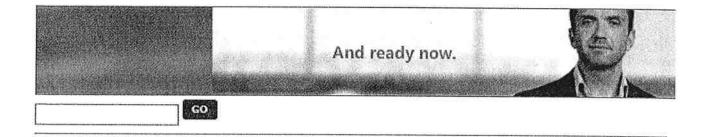
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Bank of America hits WikiLeaks with financial 'Denial of Service' attack

by Steve Ragan - Dec 18 2010, 10:16



Sponsored by Financial Times

Joining Visa, MasterCard, PayPal and Post Finance, Bank of <u>America</u> said on Friday it would decline to process payments made to WikiLeaks. News of the <u>payment</u> denial arrived just 24

hours after WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange was released on bail and rumors of a financial leak began spreading.

With more than 57 million customers, Bank of America (BoA) is one of the world's largest financial institutions. In a statement issued late Friday evening, BoA said it is joining actions previously announced by Visa Europe, MasterCard, PayPal, and others (Post Finance), adding that it "will not process transactions of any type that we have reason to believe are intended for WikiLeaks."

"This decision is based upon our reasonable belief that WikiLeaks may be engaged in <u>activities</u> that are, among other things, inconsistent with our internal policies for processing payments," it explained.

Earlier this month, in separate statements to The Tech Herald, Visa Europe and MasterCard confirmed their denial of access due to questions over WikiLeaks' business.

Visa Europe explained it was dropping payments to WikiLeaks "pending further investigation into the nature of its business and whether it contravenes Visa operating rules."

MasterCard simply stated the suspension would remain "until the situation is resolved." What that situation is exactly, it would not say.

eBay-owned PayPal cited AUP violations for its decision to suspend WikiLeaks' use of its network. PayPal is the only company, despite there being no charges or evidence that says otherwise, that labeled WikiLeaks as illegal.

PayPal said on its company blog that WikiLeaks' access was "permanently restricted... due to a violation of the PayPal Acceptable Use Policy, which states that our payment service cannot be used for any activities that encourage, promote, facilitate or instruct others to engage in illegal activity."

In each case, the financial service businesses revoked access due to something that has never been proven in any court of law. It hasn't been mentioned, at least not in the major coverage of 'Cablegate', but the moment they revoked access to WikiLeaks, these five organizations were starting their own Denial-of-Service (DoS) attack.

This DoS attack impacts the way WikiLeaks can collect donations, and denies innocent consumers the ability to do so. Given the freedom stripped from consumers, you'd think there would be an issue over financial censorship.

Yet nothing has been said, and perhaps that is because WikiLeaks supporters are in the minority. The financial giants know there services are needed, and the consumer simply has to take things as they are. Else, it's spend using <u>Cash</u> alone.

Anyone with a bank account can attest to the fact that you cannot escape the relationship with Visa or MasterCard. You can, of course, cancel your PayPal account, but protected and legitimate forms of online payments are hard to come by.

On Twitter, WikiLeaks asked: "Does your business do business with Bank of America? Our advice is to place your funds somewhere safer."

That comment could lead one to assume there is something wrong with having a BoA account, aside from the censoring of its customer's <u>spending</u> power, but it could also mean that something big is coming.

Earlier this month, rumors started to spread that WikiLeaks has details on a major financial institution. Could BoA be the subject of the next leak? Is this the reason for the moves it is now making? No one yet knows, and its press statement is lacking in detail.

According to the Reykjavik Grapevine, the Icelandic Parliamentary General Committee has met to discuss the ban placed on WikiLeaks by Visa and MasterCard. The committee meeting centered on what legal grounds the two credit firms had for the ban, requesting proof that their actions were more than a decision taken because of foreign sources.

Meanwhile, DataCell, the company that processed Visa and MasterCard transactions for WikiLeaks, said it will be taking legal action against both companies.

"We can not believe WikiLeaks would even create scratch at the brand name of Visa. The suspension of payments towards WikiLeaks is a violation of the agreements with their customers," the DataCell statement said.

"Visa users have explicitly expressed their will to send their donations to WikiLeaks and Visa is not fulfilling this wish. It will probably hurt their brand much, much more to block payments towards WikiLeaks than to have them occur," it added.

The major issue is one of financial freedom. You can't use a debit or credit card from your bank without it coming from MasterCard or Visa most times. Likewise, you cannot close your BoA account in protest if it is the only bank in town, or its rates and fees make switching cost prohibitive.

It's your money, but it doesn't matter. Banking institutions can and will tell you what to do with it. Scary, eh?

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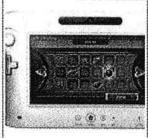
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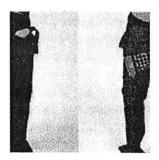
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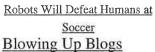






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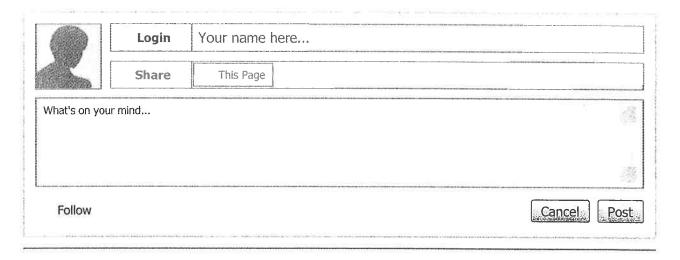


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Visa, MasterCard choke off WikiLeaks donation pipeline

Claim to have taken decision independently

Published Tuesday, December 07, 2010



MasterCard Worldwide on Monday stopped funneling payments to WikiLeaks a day after online financial transactions service disconnected a button for donations to the whistle-blower website

Visa suspended all payments to WikiLeaks, a spokesman for the debit card company said Tuesday, after the website's founder Julian Assange was arrested in London.

Visa Europe has taken action to suspend Visa payment acceptance on WikiLeaks' website pending further investigation into the nature of its business and whether it contravenes Visa operating rules," a statement

! A Visa spokesman told AFP: "This is a decision we have taken ourselves. I am not aware that we have come under any pressure from any government."

Visa's rival MasterCard Worldwide took a similar step on Monday.

WikiLeaks, which has enraged Washington by releasing tens of thousands of classified cables from US diplomats, has appealed for donations to be able to continue its activities. But financial services companies are gradually cutting off the funding.

News website CNET cited a MasterCard spokesman as saying WikiLeaks was being cut off due to rules barring use for "directly or indirectly engaging in or facilitating any action that is illegal."

WikiLeaks has responded to threats on its funding with online pleas to "Keep us strong." People could still donate to the website using Visa, bank transfers, or sending donations by old-fashioned "snail mail."

The net was tightening around Wikileaks founder Julian Assange on Monday as Swiss authorities shut a bank account and British police reportedly received an international arrest warrant issued by Sweden.

The Swiss Post Office's banking arm said it had closed an account set up by the embattled Australian after he gave false information.

"PostFinance has ended its business relationship with WikiLeaks founder Julian Paul Assange," the bank said in a statement.

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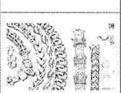
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WikiLeaks had advertised the PostFinance account details online to "donate directly to the Julian Assange and other WikiLeaks Staff Defense Fund," giving an account name of "Assange Julian Paul, Geneve."

WikiLeaks came under attack from a different angle during the weekend when a "hacktivist" operating with the handle "th3j35t3r" disabled the website with a dedicated-denial-of-service (DDoS) attack, according to Internet security firm Panda Labs.

A statement evidently issued by the hacker, or hackers, at microblogging service Twitter claimed the assault was retaliation for WikiLeaks "attempting to endanger the lives of our troops, other assets & foreign relations," according to Panda.

In one of its most explosive leaks of US secrets so far, WikiLeaks divulged a list of key infrastructure sites around the world that, if attacked by terrorists, could critically harm US security.

The DDoS attack kept WikiLeaks down for nearly 28 hours before it was moved elsewhere on the internet to evade the onslaught, according to

Mirror websites, which replicate WikiLeaks' data, have sprung up on servers in various countries

The release added to the political storm engulfing Wikileaks and Assange, who broke cover on Friday to say in an online chat that he had boosted his security after receiving death threats.

The elusive 39-year-old is thought to be hiding in Britain.

A court in the Swedish capital had ordered on November 18 an arrest warrant for Assange for questioning on suspicions of "rape, sexual molestation and unlawful coercion" in Sweden in August.





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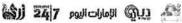
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CNET News

MasterCard pulls plug on WikiLeaks payments

MasterCard is pulling the plug on WikiLeaks a few days after PayPal did the same, drying up another source of funds, CNET has learned.

by Declan McCullagh | December 6, 2010 2:37 PM PST

MasterCard is pulling the plug on payments to WikiLeaks, a move that will dry up another source of funds for the embattled document-sharing Web site, CNET has learned.



There are some things you can't buy with MasterCard.

"MasterCard is taking action to ensure that WikiLeaks can no longer accept MasterCard branded products," a spokesman for MasterCard Worldwide said today.

That further limits the revenue sources for WikiLeaks, which has seen its finances systematically attacked in the last few days, as the Swiss authorities shut down
http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5gXMx4nWkMrOogdocId=91ae98d274de4b2a920fc4cdea133f71 a bank account used by editor Julian Assange, and PayPal permanently restricted

[http://www.cnet.com/8301-13578 3-20024649-38.html] the account used by the group. WikiLeaks has responded with an increasing number of fund-raising requests that <u>urge</u>

[http://twitter.com/wikileaks/status/10567274838622208] supporters to "KEEP US STRONG."

Assuming that MasterCard blocks payments, the only easy way to donate electronically would be with a Visa credit card through a Web page **hosted**

[https://donations.datacell.com/] by Iceland-based DataCell.com.

Representatives of Visa did not respond to requests for comment from CNET today. (WikiLeaks also solicits payments sent through the U.S. mail.)

MasterCard said it was cutting off payments because WikiLeaks is engaging in illegal activity. "MasterCard rules prohibit customers from directly or indirectly engaging in or facilitating any action that is illegal," spokesman Chris Monteiro said.

The move to cordon off WikiLeaks comes as a noose appears to be tightening around the neck of editor Julian Assange, who is the target of an arrest warrant issued today in

the United Kingdom, according to a BBC report

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-11930488]. He is expected to appear in a U.K. court [http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2010/dec/06/wikileaks-julian-assange-police] tomorrow.

WikiLeaks <u>previously was given the boot [http://www.cnet.com/8301-13578_3-20024376-38.html]</u> from its United States-based hosting services and domain name services. <u>Sen. Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut said</u> [http://lieberman.senate.gov/index.cfm/news-

<u>events/news/2010/12/amazon-severs-ties-with-wikileaks]</u> last Wednesday: "I call on any other company or organization that is hosting WikiLeaks to immediately terminate its relationship with them."

Since then, U.S. politicians have stepped up their criticism of the document-sharing site, which has posted only about 1,000 of 251,000 State Department dispatches it says it possesses and has shifted to the WikiLeaks.ch domain [http://wikileaks.ch/]. "I think the man is a high-tech terrorist," Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) said yesterday, referring to Assange. "He has done enormous damage to our country."

In addition, the incoming chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee wants WikiLeaks listed as a "terrorist" organization

[http://www.cnet.com/8301-13578 3-20023941-38.html], which would prohibit U.S. banks from processing payments and make it a felony for anyone else to provide "material support or resources" to the group. CNET reported earlier today [http://www.cnet.com/8301-31921 3-20024766-281.html] that some U.S. government employees are being blocked from visiting WikiLeaks' Web site and the

[http://www.cnet.com/profile/declanoo/]

myriad mirror sites that have sprouted in the last few days.

h [http://www.cnet.com/profile/declan00/]

h [http://www.mccullagh.org/] is the chief political 'NET. Declan previously was a reporter for Time and the chief for Wired and wrote the Taking Liberties section and Other People's Money column for CBS News' Web site.



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