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US recognizes Jerusalem as Capital of Israel

Date	6th December 2017
Trigger event	President Donald Trump has recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and is making preparations to move the U.S. Embassy there
Regions directly involved	U.S.A., Israel
Regions influenced	Neighbouring Arab states, Allies of U.S.A., Muslim countries globally
Type of risk/cyber threat	Hacktivist/Potentially APT. Destructive retaliation and spontaneous or coordinated protest. Deliberate destructive infections, DDoS, Defacements.
Potential victims	U.S. government and national institutions, Israeli government and national institutions.
Planned demonstration	#OpIsrael, #OpUSA by Anonymous and affiliates Call for a "third Intifada" and "day of rage" by Hamas and Hezbollah

Summary

On Wednesday 6th of December 2017, Donald Trump made a statement recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and instructed the State Department to begin preparations for the U.S. Embassy to be relocated from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. This step in U.S. foreign Policy towards Israel is highly contentious, and within a number of hours sparked demonstrations of protest across Turkey, Jordan and Gaza. It is evident that the U.S. was aware that the action would increase risk from a cable issued by the U.S. State Department to its global diplomatic posts: "Embassy Tel Aviv and Consulate General Jerusalem request

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that all non-essential visitors defer their travel to Israel, Jerusalem and the West Bank from December 4-December 20, 2017"[1].

The decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel sparked international rebuke, causing both allies and adversaries to deliberate over the appropriate response[2]. Eight countries: Bolivia, Egypt, France, Italy, Senegal, Sweden, the United Kingdom and Uruguay requested an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council[3].

In the weeks following the U.S. announcement to relocate its embassy to Jerusalem, several countries have publicly announced their intent to either join the U.S. in relocating their embassies to Jerusalem or expressed intent to leave their embassies in Tel Aviv.

Nations announcing plans to relocate their embassies to Jerusalem:

- **Czech Republic.** The Czech Republic became the first country to announce plans to relocate its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem following the U.S. announcement[4].

- **Guatemala.** On December 24th, Guatemala announced plans to relocate its embassy to Jerusalem and later offered to assist other nations to also relocate their embassies[5].

Nations announcing plans to relocate their embassies to East Jerusalem (the eastern portion of Jerusalem previously controlled by Jordan):

- **Turkey.** Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan says that Turkey will move its embassy to East Jerusalem and will encourage Muslim leaders to recognize East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine[6].

- **Lebanon.** Lebanese Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil announced that Lebanon will plan to move its embassy to East Jerusalem[7].

Nations announcing they will not be relocating their embassies in Israel:

- **Japan.** Japan will not move its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem according to Japan's Foreign Minister, Taro Kono[8].

- **El Salvador.** Despite having only moved its embassy out of Jerusalem in 2006, El Salvador announced it would not relocate its embassy back to Jerusalem out of respect for the peace process[9].

- **Romania.** Romanian President Klaus Iohannis told Israeli PM Netanyahu that Romania would hold on making a decision to relocate their embassy until progress was made in the peace process[10].

- **Hungary.** Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban says they will not change their current policy in the Middle East and will not seek to relocate their embassy to Jerusalem[11].

- **Poland.** The Polish Foreign Minister says that Poland still recognizes Tel Aviv as the capital of Israel and has not announced plans to relocate its embassy to Jerusalem[12].

Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Tzipi Hotovely has stated that at least ten more nations, including some

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1   https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/1.827295
2   https://twitter.com/MiddleEastEye/status/938486049868787713
3   http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/jerusalem-live-updates-israel-capital-donald-trump-latest-news-palestine-us-president-recognise-a8094321.html
4   https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/europe/1.827662
5   https://www.timesofisrael.com/guatemala-offers-to-help-countries-move-their-embassies-to-jerusalem/
6   https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/17/world/middleeast/turkey-embassy-east-jerusalem-erdogan.html
7   https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20171214-lebanon-calls-for-building-embassy-in-east-jerusalem/
8   https://www.timesofisrael.com/japans-fm-says-tokyo-wont-follow-us-on-jerusalem-embassy-move/
9   http://jewishnews.timesofisrael.com/el-salvador-confirms-it-will-not-move-embassy-back-to-jerusalem/
10 https://www.romania-insider.com/romania-wont-move-embassy-jerusalem/ https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-israel-hungary/hungary-not-planning-to-move-israeli-embassy-to-jerusalem-pm-idUSKBN1E51YQ
11 https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-israel-hungary/hungary-not-planning-to-move-israeli-embassy-to-jerusalem-pm-idUSKBN1E51YQ
12 http://www.i24news.tv/en/news/international/163461-171224-analysis-poland-and-israel-face-off-with-world-bodies-in-show-of-sovereign-will

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in Europe, may announce plans to relocate their embassies to Jerusalem[13].

Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri called on Muslim countries to relocate their embassies to Jerusalem[14].

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is an emotive topic for many people across the world. The physical manifestation of this emotion has already been displayed in the form of spontaneous and coordinated protest. Further violence is likely. Dedicated groups will undoubtedly mirror this violence across the hacktivist landscape. A typical hacktivist campaign has already been organized in which a mixture of Israeli and United States targets have been drawn up. The question remains whether some of the more sophisticated groups will take action, and whether those more vehemently opposed states will deploy their offensive capabilities.

Background

Following World War 1 and the subsequent collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the area then known simply as "Palestine" was given to the United Kingdom to administer under the British Mandate for Palestine[15]. This included the territory which became the modern State of Israel and the State of Palestine. In February of 1947, Britain announced its intent to terminate the Mandate for Palestine and recommended that the United Nations come to an agreement on the region's future[16]. The resulting U.N. partition plan of 1947 called for the creation of an Arab state and a Jewish state and that the city of Jerusalem be governed by a special international regime[17]. The British Mandate for Palestine expired on 14 May 1948 and the Jewish People's Council approved a proclamation establishing the State of Israel immediately after the expiration. On 15 May 1948, forces from Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Iraq invaded the territory, starting the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. The war ended with armistices between Israel and the involved Arab nations in 1949.

The new nation of Israel chose Jerusalem as the country's capital. All branches of Israeli government are currently housed there. Israel was able to capture and annex West Jerusalem as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war and later East Jerusalem as a result of the 1967 Six-Day War. Prior to the United States officially recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital, the international community had elected not to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital largely out of deference to the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians.

Historically, there have been nations that chose to place their embassies in Jerusalem: Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, the Netherlands, Panama, Uruguay, and Venezuela. These nations moved their embassies out of Jerusalem after the United Nations Security Council adopted UNSC Resolution 478[18] condemning Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem. This resolution came after UNSC Resolution 476[19] was adopted in response to Israel's Jerusalem Law[20] in 1980 which states, "Jerusalem, complete and united, is the capital of Israel." Despite this, Costa Rica and El Salvador moved their embassies back to Jerusalem in 1984, where they remained until moving them out of the city in 2006[21].

Fallout Since the U.S. Announcement

On 18 December 2017, the United Nations Security Council voted on a resolution to denounce the U.S. decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and announce plans to move its embassy to the city. The U.S. was the only member of the security council to veto the resolution[22].

Days later, on 21 December, the United Nations General Assembly passed a non-binding resolution to

13 https://nypost.com/2017/12/25/israel-in-talks-with-more-than-10-countries-over-jerusalem-embassy-move/
14 http://iran-daily.com/News/208198.html
15 https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/text-of-the-british-mandate-for-palestine
16 https://undocs.org/A/364(SUPP)
17 https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/181(II)
18 https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/DDE590C6FF232007852560DF0065FDDB
19 https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/6DE6DA8A650B4C3B852560DF00663826
20 https://www.knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/basic10_eng.htm
21 https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3295745,00.html
22 http://www.cnn.com/2017/12/18/middleeast/us-un-security-council-jerusalem/index.html

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condemn the U.S. position on Jerusalem and encourage countries to avoid moving their embassies to the city. The vote passed 128 – 9, with 35 abstaining from the vote[23].

In response, the Trump Administration announced on 24 December a proposed $285 million cut in funding for the United Nations and indicated that further cuts were likely[24]. The United States currently spends about $10 billion per year on the United Nations and various U.N. programs[25].

The U.S. is is currently withholding $65 million in aid that would benefit Palestinians[26]. This decision could be in response to harsh Palestinian criticism of the U.S. announcement on Jerusalem.

Israel's Shin Bet security agency released statistics stating that security incidents in Israel, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank went up from 84 in November 2017 to 249 in December 2017. There is no direct correlation to the U.S. announcement regarding Jerusalem on 6 December 2017, but the timing of the jump in security incidents suggests that the U.S. announcement likely played a role in the increased violence[27].

Analysis

While President Trump's actions regarding Jerusalem are provocative, they are not new to U.S. foreign policy. In 1995, Congress passed the Jerusalem Embassy Act recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and specifying that the U.S. Embassy in Israel be relocated to Jerusalem by 1999[28]. U.S. Presidents have since signed a waiver every six months allowing the embassy to remain in Tel Aviv for national security reasons.

Other U.S. Presidents and presidential candidates have made comments indicating their support for relocating the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. Previous Presidents have not followed through on these promises in order to to maintain peace in the

region and assumedly to allow the Jerusalem issue to be discussed in peace talks between Israel and Palestine.

- "But something will happen when I'm president: as soon as I take office I will begin the process of moving the U.S. ambassador to the city Israel has chosen as its capital." — Presidential candidate, George W. Bush, 2000[29]

- "You know, I have always wanted to move our embassy to West Jerusalem. We have a designated site there. I have not done so because I didn't want to do anything to undermine our ability to help broker a secure and fair and lasting peace for Israelis and for Palestinians." — President Bill Clinton, 2000[30]

- "Jerusalem will remain the capital of Israel, and it must remain undivided." — Presidential candidate, Barack Obama, 2008[31] (He later backtracked on this comment)

On June 5th 2017, the US Senate passed a resolution reaffirming the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995 and called on the President to abide by its provisions[32]. It also mentions, however, that the "permanent status of Jerusalem remains a matter to be decided between the parties through final status negotiations towards a two-state solution."

Disputes over Jerusalem are unlikely to be resolved in an immediately conclusive or cohesive manner due to the historical and political significance of the site. The modern political power struggles in the region are underscored by a deeper religious conflict that spans centuries. Any proposal will inevitably be met with protest and threats of extremist violence.

Cyber Landscape

It is most likely that any activity will be observed first

23 https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/12/21/572565091/u-n-votes-overwhelmingly-to-condemn-trumps-jerusalem-decision
24 http://www.newsweek.com/united-nations-donald-trump-nikki-haley-jerusalem-funding-758849
25 http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/03/13/white-house-seeks-to-cut-billions-in-funding-for-united-nations/
26 http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-42711985
27 https://www.timesofisrael.com/terror-attacks-tripled-after-trump-jerusalem-recognition-shin-bet-stats-show/
28 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerusalem_Embassy_Act
29 http://www.nytimes.com/2000/05/23/us/bush-says-clinton-misstepped-in-israel.html
30 http://www.nytimes.com/2000/07/29/world/clinton-hints-that-he-is-ready-to-move-embassy-to-jerusalem.html
31 http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/07/us/politics/07obama.html
32 https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-resolution/176?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22senate+resolution+jerusa-lem+50%22%5D%7D&r=2

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from the hacktivist community. In the past, countries such as Iran have been accused of deploying offensive cyber action against Israel.

Hacktivists

Social media has been awash with tweets and retweets of both old and new declarations of potential cyber-attacks against Donald Trump, the U.S.A. or Israel. The following tweets provide some examples of potential new hacktivist campaigns: (to the right).

The following are a list of targets outlined on a pastebin page for #OpIsrael #OpUSA.[33] The "op" was planned for the 8th of December 2017. The campaign asked participants to contribute "Data Dump, Government Breach, Defacing, DDoSing." No significant activities were associated with this campaign on the date of the planned operation. Since then, the hashtag #OpIsrael has be used to announce various defacements of Israeli websites amongst other low profile attacks.

Specific targets Mentioned:

https://www.usa.gov/ = USA

https://www.gov.il/ = Israel

https://www.state.gov/ = USA

http://www.president.gov.il/ = Israel

https://www.whitehouse.gov/ = USA

http://itrade.gov.il/ = Israel

https://www.ssa.gov/ = USA

http://www.investinisrael.gov.il/ = Israel

https://www.data.gov/ = USA

http://www.antitrust.gov.il/ = Israel

https://www.irs.gov/ = USA

http://www.boi.org.il/en/ = Israel

https://www.federalreserve.gov/ = USA

http://www.space.gov.il/ = Israel

https://www.shabak.gov.il/ = Israel

Notable Hashtags:

#OpUsa

#OpDonaldTrump

#OpIsrael

#OpIsrahell

#OpZionistTrump

33. https://pastebin.com/tgbkCQ61

#AnonGhost
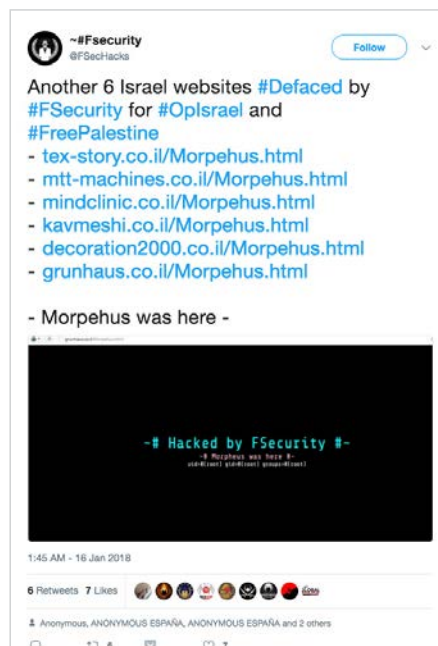
#AnonymousPalestine

#HandsOffAlQuds

#AnonymousAlgeria

#AnonymousVenezuela

Past defacements and low level attacks have been orchestrated in support of the Palestinian plight by a number of teams including: AnonGhost, Algerian Hackers, Anonymous Ghost Gaza, Gaza Hacking Team, Team System DZ, ShadowTeam, Turk Hack team and many more. There is a possibility the members of these groups may reignite campaigns in response to Donald Trump's announcement.

Nation-State Offensives

A number of countries have spoken out against the the United States decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Saudi Arabia stated that it "would constitute a flagrant provocation of Muslims, all over

Example of website defacement announcements associated with #OpIsrael

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the world." Palestinian based group Hamas has said the decision would "open the doors of hell" and French President Emmanuel Macron said "France did not support the move[34]." Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said through a government spokesperson that the decision would be "plunging the region and the world into a fire with no end in sight." Iran has stated that the decision "proves their incompetence and failure...Victory is for the Islamic nation. Palestine will be free, and the Palestinian people will be victorious[35]." Jordan's King Abdullah has said that the move would have "dangerous repercussions on the stability and security of the region.[36]" Many U.S. allies have also spoken out against the move, including the United Kingdom.

Cyber attacks against Israel were believed to be conducted by Iran during the Israeli military offensive "Operation Protective Edge" in 2014. The attacks appear to have been denial-of-service attacks and "accelerated as the military operation expanded on the ground," peaking on the last day of Ramadan observed in Iran as Jerusalem day[37]. There have already been clashes between Israeli troops and protesters in Ramallah[38]. If enough observable violence is seen from Israel, it could draw in neighboring countries to defend the Palestinians. Sources also claim that groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah have cyber capabilities[39] [40] [41].

Conclusions and Recommendations

Tensions have escalated across the Middle East and beyond as a result of the U.S. announcement regarding Jerusalem. There is a strong likelihood that protests will continue to spill into the cyber theater. Organizations that feature as part of the national backbone of either Israel or the U.S.A. are likely targets if more advanced or nation-state actors engage. This may include government, military and defense, national banks, telecoms, aviation, energy and educational sectors. Lower level actors will continue to attack low-hanging fruit such as defacing unpatched or misconfigured websites.

Possible Atacks:

- DDoS
- Defacements
- Destructive infections

Recommendations:

- Organizations should monitor ongoing developments related to this issue for any mention of their brand on a target list.

- Organizations should ensure external facing resources are fully patched and protected by typical perimeter security controls

- Organizations should ensure internal systems are patched and monitor for potential phishing attempts

- Mitigations against DDoS should be considered for organizations particularly susceptible to significant impact from such attacks

34 http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-42259443
35 https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/12/iran-reaction-jerusalem-capital-trump-khamenei-rouhani.html
36 http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/12/jordan-humiliated-trump-decision-jerusalem-171206142619670.html
37 http://www.inss.org.il/publication/the-iranian-cyber-offensive-during-operation-protective-edge/
38 http://abcnews.go.com/International/palestinians-israeli-forces-clash-trumps-jerusalem-decision/story?id=51646135
39 https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/07/palestine-israel-internet-cyber-war-hacking.html
40 http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Analysis-Hamas-honeypot-operation-shows-a-sophisticated-cyber-espionage-unit-478219
41 https://www.defensetech.org/2008/06/02/hezbollahs-cyber-warfare-program/

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