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FROM THE DIRECTOR OF "BIG DADDY"

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Shawn Anderson, a sophomore horticulture major, flame sterilizes an inoculating loop before transferring soft rot bacteria from one agar plate to another.

Protesters resort to hacking

Anti-globalist 'hacktivists' target WTO, big business online

GENEVA (AP) — The technicians at the World Trade Organization (WTO) got a bit suspicious when "journalists" in an online press conference went by screen names like "NO-TO-WTO."

Still, WTO Director-General Mike Moore gamely answered all questions thrown at him — until he was knocked off-line by anti-globalization protesters with excellent computer skills.

This week, similarly motivated "hacktivists" grabbed headlines, announcing they had collected credit card and other personal data on some 1,400 business and political leaders by breaking into the database of last month's World Economic Forum.

and held "virtual sit-ins" designed to overload servers.

More recently, the tactic has been used in Serbia, Pakistan and India — and by both Palestinians and Israelis in the Middle East. In one case,

"This poses operational security problems, (and) goes beyond what we've seen before."

— Kent Anderson
Control Risks Group vice president of computer services

Palestinian sympathizers broke into a Website operated by a pro-Israel lobbying group in the United States, stealing credit card information and email addresses.

The theft of private data is a relatively new tactic, however, that goes beyond defacing Websites and electronic bombardment of servers.

Anti-globalist protesters contend the WTO's trade treaties benefit big corporations and rich countries at the expense of the environment and

workers. They consider the World Economic Forum, which holds high-profile annual meetings at the Swiss resort of Davos, epitome of the elitist dealmaking they oppose.

Protesters who showed up in person were largely stymied by heavy police presence at the month's Davos meeting. Online, however, they effectively mounted physical barriers.

The Net "is another frontier people to engage in these types of activities," said Joel Scambray, a security analyst at Foundstone Inc.

The attacks against forum organizers showed just how far hacktivists could reach: They obtained travel itineraries — including the names — of politicians flying around the world, and published them on the Web.

"This poses operational security problems, (and) goes beyond what we've seen before," said Kent Anderson, vice president of computer security with the London-based Control Risks Group.

Almost every major corporation and organization has been hit at one time or another by hacking, with McDonald's, Starbucks and the WTO favorite targets of hacktivists.

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