

# LOCAL WEBSITE HACKED

## Island Life magazine caught in global hacktivist crossfire

By Dan McGarry

**THE WEBSITE BELONGING TO** Island Life magazine, which is published here in Port Vila, was hacked yesterday and defaced with pro-ISIS images and slogans.

It was restored a few hours later.

The site, islandlifemag.com, was attacked by a group that calls itself Team System DZ. Instead of the usual magazine layout, the front page was replaced for a few hours this morning by an image depicting a masked man with a bandolier and automatic weapon, with a stylised background showing the ISIS flag.

Below the image was a brief text session in English, which said in part, "I love you, Islamic State & Jihad."

Island Life publisher Patricia de Vera said, "It was quite a little bit of a shock, opening your website and seeing a

dude in a balaclava sporting a machine gun. It took me a few seconds to realise that our website has been hacked."

She added, "Although we are now a regional publication, with a relatively big presence

in Australia, I really don't understand why we were hacked. We are not a political publication, we carry nice stories about people doing great things in the Pacific. Perhaps they were reading our stories, felt jealous that they were not here, and decided to hack us! It is quite humorous really, it was so out of place."

The Team System DZ group has been responsible for hundreds of website defacements since early 2014, when they first appeared online. They have been identified by one group familiar with hacking culture as a loosely affiliated group of anti-Israel teenagers, most of whom are Arab or of Arab descent.

This latest series of website hacks seems to be designed to capitalise on public attention given to the recent terrorist attacks in Paris.

The hacks are part of a number of tit-for-tat online vigilante actions by so-called hacktivists. Perhaps the highest profile of these is the #OpParis campaign recently announced by Anonymous in retaliation for the Paris attacks.



The Island Life Magazine website as it looked at 11:00 a.m. yesterday. The website was restored a few hours later.

As this story was being prepared, Anonymous claimed that it had shut down over 2200 Twitter accounts run by ISIS supporters and sympathisers. Website defacements of the kind apparently carried out by

Team System DZ are usually low-skilled, automated 'bot' attacks, which often prey on known software vulnerabilities and configuration settings. Commercial web hosting sites such as Island Life's

provider, Hostgator, are popular targets. They host thousands of sites, so a single vulnerability can result in dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of defacements. The people performing these

attacks are often castigated as 'script kiddies' by security professionals. They are widely regarded as low-skilled vandals, performing the online equivalent of throwing rocks at windows.