



AS IT IS

17-Year-Old Charged with Seizing Twitter Accounts of Famous People

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A 17-year-old boy from Florida and two others were charged Friday with temporarily gaining control of the Twitter accounts of several famous people. The accounts belonged to former President Barack Obama, former Vice President Joe Biden, Tesla founder Elon Musk and others.

Florida state attorney Andrew Warren said suspect Graham Ivan Clark is “a 17-year-old kid who apparently just **graduated** high school.” He added, “But make no mistake, this was not an ordinary 17-year-old. This was a highly **sophisticated** attack on a magnitude not seen before.” He called Clark the “mastermind” of the attack.

Clark was arrested Friday in Tampa, Florida. He will be charged as an adult under Florida law.

Federal officials from California also charged Mason Sheppard, a 19-year-old Briton, and Nima Fazeli, 22, of Orlando, Florida in the nationwide investigation into the attack.

Warren told reporters at a news conference Friday, “Clark hacked into the Twitter accounts of famous people and celebrities, but they were not the primary victims.” He said Clark took “over \$100,000 in Bitcoin in just one day.” Bitcoin is a form of digital money not supported by any government but exchanged by many people online.

On July 15, the hackers took control and sent out false tweets from the accounts of Musk, Obama, and Biden. Others included Amazon’s Jeff Bezos, Microsoft’s Bill Gates and billionaires Michael Bloomberg and Warren Buffett. **Entertainers** Kanye West and his wife, Kim Kardashian West, were also hacked.

The tweets offered to send \$2,000 for every \$1,000 sent to an anonymous Bitcoin address. Over \$100,000 in bitcoins were sent to the address before Twitter could disable the accounts and removed the posts.

On Thursday, Twitter said in an [update](#) that the hackers “targeted a small number of employees through a phone spear phishing attack” to gain access to passwords and other **credentials**. The social media company said the attackers then used the access to target 130 accounts, sent Tweets from 45, accessed direct messages from 36, and downloaded data from seven others.

Florida officials said Clark is facing 30 **felony** charges. Twitter said it would provide a more detailed report later “given the ongoing law enforcement investigation.”

I’m Mario Ritter.

Hai Do wrote this story for VOA Learning English. Mario Ritter, Jr. was the editor.

Words in This Story

graduated -*v.* to earn a degree showing that a person has completed studies at a school or university

sophisticated -*adj.* highly developed and complex

entertainer -*n.* a person, such as an actor, singer or comedian, who entertains people through performance

credentials -*n.* (*pl.*) documents or identifying material that shows a person can have use of something

felony -*n.* a serious crime

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