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Tuesday, April 17, 2001

Web security guru warns of hack attacks

By **GEOFF MATTHEWS, Ottawa Sun**

Organizers of the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City could face some of their toughest security challenges from thousands of kilometres away.

Much has been made of the fence surrounding the old city and border scrutiny to keep known troublemakers out of Canada, but computer hackers may pose just as serious a threat, says an official from a local Internet security specialist.

From their computer keyboards in Europe, Asia or South America, hackers determined to get their point across or just to create a little mischief can be expected to pay a visit to the summit, said Robert Lendvai, vice-president of marketing for Ottawa's Cyberpass.

Lendvai calls them "hacktivists" and said their chosen methods of disruption are likely to include "spoofing" websites or overloading them so they become inaccessible.

Spoofing involves inserting a fictitious page at someone else's URL, he said. "So instead of seeing what should be there visitors to the site get a message from a special interest group."

It's fairly easy to do, Lendvai said, but is also easily detected and remedied.

More harmful, he said, is an overloading attack like those perpetrated against e-Bay and Amazon in recent months. "We saw this sort of thing at the Seattle summit and we can expect to see it in Quebec."

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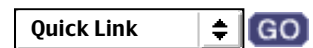
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