

[Sign in](#) | [Register](#) | [Mobile version](#) | Text [larger](#) | [smaller](#)

Go to:

guardian.co.uk

[News](#) | [Sport](#) | [Comment](#) | [Culture](#) | [Business](#) | [Money](#) | [Life & style](#) | [Travel](#) | [Environment](#) | [TV](#) | [Blogs](#)
[Video](#) | [Community](#) | [Jobs](#)

[Business](#)
[Markets](#)
[Economics](#)
[Dan Roberts](#)
[Nils Pratley](#)
[Andrew Clark](#)
[Follow us on Twitter](#)
[Podcasts](#)
[Small business](#)

Shell critic says oil major targeting his website

Reuters, Wednesday December 2 2009

By Tom Bergin

LONDON, Dec 2 (Reuters) - A prominent Internet critic of Royal Dutch Shell says the oil major has asked an anti-cyber fraud agency to target his site, which Shell admits provides better information on the group than its own internal communications.

John Donovan, who runs the Royaldutchshell.plc website, where disaffected Shell employees post company news and gossip, said the move suggests Shell has adopted more aggressive tactics in its long battle to shut him down. "They are very worried about the leaks," Donovan told Reuters in a telephone interview.

"They are trying to track down the people who are leaking information to us," he added.

The allegations are based on emails Donovan said Shell released to him following a request under data protection law rights. Donovan shared these, and a letter on Shell headed paper responding to Donovan's request, with Reuters.

Shell did not comment on the veracity of the communication or any of Donovan's allegations, despite several emails and phone calls requesting it.

However, Gavin White, from Shell's legal department, whose name appeared on the cover letter to Donovan, confirmed that Donovan made a request for information.

"The request is not a matter for public discussion or

[Digg it](#)



A [larger](#) | [smaller](#)

[Business](#)



Latest from business

Last 24 hours

1. [Dubai is still 'strong' says ruler as he hits out at investors](#)
2. [The new Iceland? Greece fights to rein in debt](#)

comment," White said.

One email between Shell employees dated June 2009, said an individual whose name is blanked out but apparently also a Shell employee, met with "NCFTA" to discuss the website.

The email adds that resources had been assigned to NCFTA "that are RDS (presumably Royal Dutch Shell) focused" and that "There will be no attempt to do anything visible to Donovan".

Donovan believes NCFTA refers to the National Cyber Forensics and Training Alliance, a Pittsburgh-based organisation, whose website says it is supported by Fortune 500 companies and that its purpose is to help tackle cyber fraud.

A Google search for NCFTA yields the Pittsburgh organisation as the top result.

National Cyber Forensics and Training Alliance did not respond to emails or telephone calls.

Another email, dated March 2007 said Shell was monitoring emails from Shell servers globally to Donovan and internal traffic to their website. The email noted this information was "not for publication".

LONG-RUNNING BATTLE

Donovan, 62, and his father, Alfred, 92, have been vocal Internet critics of Europe's largest oil company by market value since the 1990s after a business dispute with Shell, which was a client of their sales promotion business.

That case, and two libel actions against Shell, were settled out of court a decade ago but the internet battle has continued.

Shell insiders use the Donovans' site to leak company secrets including, in the past 12 months alone, a planned restructuring of the group under new Chief Executive Peter Voser and a big hole in Shell's pension fund.

The website, which Donovan said receives 2 million hits a month, has also featured attacks on Shell's safety and environmental record.

Most of the vast reams of information and news reports on the site is unflattering about Shell, whose market capitalisation tops \$182 billion.

Another email seen by Reuters, apparently from a Shell communications representative to U.S. news network Fox News said: "royaldutchshell plc.com is an excellent source of group news and comment and I recommend it far above what our own group internal comms puts out".

After failing to have the Donovans' ownership of the royaldutchshellplc.com domain name removed in a legal challenge in 2005, Shell appeared to have taken the approach of ignoring the site for fear of raising its profile any higher.

However, Donovan fears the company had simply adopted different tactics.

In March 2008, the website faced a cyber "assault".

3. [RBS bonus pool now under government control](#)
4. [Dubai authorities may be forced to put up Emirates airline as debt collateral](#)
5. [Billions wiped off markets as Dubai returns to work](#)

[More top stories](#)



[Yorkshire and Chelsea building societies to merge](#)

[RBS bonus pool now under state control](#)

[MPC economist makes bubble warning](#)

[All today's stories](#)

Last 24 hours

1. [RBS bonus pool now under government control](#) (173 comments)
2. [Bubble warning from Bank of England's chief economist](#) (9)
3. [The Business podcast: The rise and fall of Dubai: plus pre-budget report predictions](#) (2)

Our selection of best buys

Mortgages	Credit cards	Loans
Savings	3.59% More	
BS		
First Direct	3.64% More	
First Direct	2.58% More	

[See more mortgage best buys](#)

[Get a personal quote](#)

Free finance guides



[Recession investing](#)
[Online trading](#)
[Pensions & annuities](#)

[View all brochures](#)

Most viewed on guardian.co.uk

24 hours

1. [Careless driver writes off Italian police's prized Lamborghini](#)
2. [Barack Obama's war: the final push in Afghanistan](#)
3. [Leaked emails won't harm UN climate body, says chairman](#)

"Someone was sending so many requests it kept on crashing it," Donovan said.

Donovan said he complained to Shell about the problem and that the same day, the problem stopped.

Shell declined to comment about this incident but in a letter from Shell to Donovan, posted on his site, Shell denied any responsibility.

In recent years, heavy-handed corporate attempts to stem leaks have caused public and political outrage.

Personal computer maker Hewlett-Packard became the target of lawsuits, a U.S. Congressional inquiry and police investigation due to its efforts to stem leaks in 2005 and 2006.

HP hired investigators, who impersonated reporters, board members and employees to obtain private phone records.

Deutsche Telekom is the subject of a long-running investigation in Germany after allegations it spied on directors and journalists to find out who was leaking information to the press in 2005.

Prosecutors have launched a criminal investigation into corporate spying at Deutsche Bank, which said in July that a detective agency it had hired had spied on people the bank deemed a threat.

Deutsche Telekom is the subject of a long-running investigation in Germany after allegations it spied on directors and journalists to find out who was leaking information to the press in 2005.

(Editing by Sitaraman Shankar)

((Reporting by Tom Bergin, +44 207 542 1029, tom.bergin@reuters.com, Reuters Messaging tom.bergin.reuters.com@reuters.net))

[Printable version](#)

Ads by Google

Shell Fuel Efficiency

Find out how you could save money when you drive with Shell
www.shell.co.uk/everydrop

Low Cost Shell Scheme

Fast Assembly & Knockdown Nationwide Delivery & Installation
www.shellschemedirect.co.uk

Arrested for Fraud?

Expert Advice Nationwide Call Now 0800 5593500
www.rahmanravelli.co.uk

4. [Manchester United v Tottenham Hotspur - as it happened! | Barney Ronay](#)

5. [Canada's image lies in tatters. It is now to climate what Japan is to whaling | George Monbiot](#)

[More top stories](#)

7 days

1. [Careless driver writes off Italian police's prized Lamborghini](#)

2. [Pretending the climate email leak isn't a crisis won't make it go away | George Monbiot](#)

3. [Michelle Obama 'racist' picture that is topping Google Images removed](#)

4. [The dark side of the internet](#)

5. [The Joy of Six: Great goals from the past decade | John Ashdown](#)

[More top stories](#)

Free P&P at the Guardian bookshop



[Footnotes in Gaza](#)
£20.00 with free UK delivery



[Our Choice](#)
£16.99 with free UK delivery

[Browse more business and law books](#)
[Buy books from the Guardian Bookshop](#)

Sponsored features



[The Guardian Media Academy](#)

Develop your media skills with guardian.co.uk



[Win a Nikon D5000 digital SLR](#)

Plus, top photo tips from Guardian camera club

guardianjobs

UK

[Browse senior executive jobs](#)

[Manufacturing / Operations / Production Manager c....](#)

nexus recruitment solutions.
swindon.
c. £55,000 + Benefits.

[Cathedral Administrator](#)

wells cathedral.
this is a widely-varied and hugely satisfying role....
unspecified.

[General Manager](#)

destination devon.
devon.
c£35,000 + Bonus potential.

USA

[Browse senior executive jobs](#)

[License/buy our content](#) | [Privacy policy](#) | [Terms & conditions](#) | [Advertising guide](#) | [Accessibility](#) | [A-Z index](#) | [Inside guardian.co.uk blog](#) | [About guardian.co.uk](#) | [Join our dating site today](#)

guardian.co.uk © Guardian News and Media Limited 2009