

## ICANN to turn off terrorist website

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The Washington-controlled Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) gave a firm assurance yesterday that it would take all possible steps to stop the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) from illegally delivering its propaganda over the Internet.

"ICANN does not tolerate terrorists operating illegally on its Internet," the organization said in a statement. "Since we first learned of the LTTE's content piracy, we have been actively pursuing a number of technical alternatives to halt the website. We are clear in our resolve to ending this terrorist organisation's unauthorised use of our Internet."

The announcement came after Internet officials and technical experts met Sri Lanka's Ambassador to the United States Bernard Goonetilleke on Tuesday to discuss the steps ICANN was taking to address the unauthorised use of a website by the LTTE. "We have been actively pursuing avenues to terminate the illegal usage of our Internet," ICANN chairman Vint Cerf said.

In a telephone interview, ICANN's chairman said his corporation would do "every possible thing to turn off the LTTE (sponsored national Television of Tamil Eelam and Voice of the Tigers podcast) as soon as possible" from their website. Cerf maintained the position of the corporation that the LTTE was pirating an empty web server for the broadcasts. He said it was actually stealing the space of the web server and called it piracy.

Asked whether Al Qaeda could use the same web server for the purpose of an attack against the United States, Cerf said it was only a hypothetical situation. But when pressed for an answer, Cerf said it was technically possible.

Cerf said no customer is authorised to provide web service to a terrorist organization and maintained it was an empty web server the LTTE was using. Cerf denied earlier published newspaper reports that ICANN had allowed Hezbollah, another terrorist group, to set up a website and insisted "Not in my time".

While refusing to give a date for turning off the LTTE, the ICANN chairman said "if you understand the Internet technology it is quite a complex task and it will be done as soon as possible".

According to the ICANN statement, "the Internet, the leading provider of global networked communications, today issued a statement with regard to the unauthorised use by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The US State Department lists the LTTE as a foreign terrorist organisation."

The Sri Lanka Embassy and Internet agree that the illegal website by the LTTE is a violation of Sri Lankan and US laws. Following the discussion, Ambassador Goonetilleke said "I am satisfied that ICANN is taking this unauthorised website very seriously, and believe it would do all that it can to stop the terrorist podcasts. I am confident that ICANN will continue to cooperate with Sri Lankan authorities in this matter."

The issue was also taken up by Sri Lanka at a meeting of the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority in East Timor last month, Sri Lankan officials said.

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