

THE CHAMBERMAID'S REVENGE: IMF HACKED

Usually, the apparent purpose of hacks is fairly banal. To steal defense secrets. To profit organized crime. To embarrass a political opponent.

But a reported sophisticated hack on the IMF is far more intriguing.

Because the fund has been at the center of economic bailout programs for Portugal, Greece and Ireland – and possesses sensitive data on other countries that may be on the brink of crisis – its database contains potentially market-moving information. It also includes communications with national leaders as they negotiate, often behind the scenes, on the terms of international bailouts. Those agreements are, in the words of one fund official, “political dynamite in many countries.” It was unclear what information the attackers were able to access.

The concern about the attack was so significant that the World Bank, an international agency focused on economic development, whose headquarters is across the street from the I.M.F. in downtown Washington, cut the computer link that allows the two institutions to share information.

The story mentions market-moving information, so I assume it could just be someone trying to play the bond markets.

But what is the scenario under which hackers compromise IMF's top secret files to get information on the deals signed between the bankers and debtor nations? While I'd like to see that information—and I'm sure the Greeks rioting in the streets and the Irish stoically

bearing down accepting their fate would like to see that information—I don't understand what entity would sponsor the hackers? Organized crime? China? Hacktivists? If it were the latter—which seems most plausible to me—wouldn't we already be looking at the demands German bankers made of Greek leaders?

I'm sure we'll learn more about this in the future. But for now, I'm really curious about who had the means and motive to hack the IMF.

Aside from a bunch of chambermaids, of course.