FIGHTING ILLEGAL STREAMING

Football Tournament Russia 2018

Report #2, June 18-27

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INTRODUCTION

In our first report that addressed the piracy landscape surrounding this summer's major football event, we looked at five matches from the first round games, as well as issues surrounding live streaming and OTT boxes. We thank you so much for all your compliments, comments and questions. We shall try to address most of them while continuing our analysis of illegal streaming during a further nine observed first round matches. In this report we also focus on an unexpected video game streaming platform that enables illegal streaming, the role of VPNs, and we dig further into the lengthy debate of online responsibility. We hope that you will enjoy reading our second Fighting Illegal Streaming Report.

PART 1 – ANALYSIS FROM OUR TOOL - RAW RESULTS

Thanks to our dedicated tool, we were able to measure several aspects of illegal streaming observed in the course of the seven matches listed below.

Please note that these figures represent the links that were not affected nor targeted, nor seen by the tracking tools used by many right-owners or Pay TV operators in the course of these matches. In no way do they represent the total of the links present during these nine football matches.

Tunisia vs England, June 18

Russia vs Egypt, June 19

Portugal vs Morocco, June 20

Argentina vs Croatia, June 21

France vs Peru, June 21

Germany vs Sweden, June 23

Tunisia vs Belgium, June 23

Denmark vs France, June 26

Nigeria vs Argentina, June 26

TOTAL NUMBER OF LINKS ON THE TOP 5 HOSTED DOMAINS FOR THE 9 SELECTED MATCHES

By hosted domains, we designate a site that hosts illegal videos, either directly, or through or behind a protector used as a proxy.

TOP 5 – LINK HOSTER DOMAINS	
1. Facebook	2928 links
2. Emb.aliez.me	1128 links
3. Periscope	934 links
4. Youtube	753 links
5. 0eb.net	734 links

If we compare these new numbers to the numbers of Report 1, it is clear that the overall number of links has grown; Periscope and YouTube are now entering the top 5 link hosted domains. Facebook is still by far number one in terms of illegal links hosting, on average representing 30% of the total links.

TOTAL NUMBER OF LINKS FOR THE TOP 5 DOMAIN LOCATIONS

Domains locations are sites that are openly advertising for illegal redistribution of content.

TOP 5 – DOMAIN LOCATIONS	
1. Rojadirecta.me	2168 links
2. Facebook.com	1859 links
3. Livetv.sx	1568 links
4. Ishunter.net	904 links
5. Pscp.tv	887 links

The same trend can be observed here as the number of links has grown and the type of ranking remains the same. Periscope TV (pscp.tv) has now entered the top 5 domain locations ranking. Where are the links that are listed above, hosted the most?

TOP FIVE ISPs HOSTING THE SITES DESCRIBED ABOVE

TOP 5 – ISP	
1. NForce Entertainment (Netherlands)	1138 links
2. Quasi Networks (Netherlands)	1095 links
3. Private Layer (Switzerland)	862 links
4. Marosnet (Russia)	584 links
5. Contabo GmbH (Germany)	535 links

Comparison with Report 1 shows that the same ISPs are still present with the same ranking.

RESULTS PER MATCH

Monday 18 June

GROUP G	TUNISIA	Score	ENGLAND	# of Illegal Streams
		1 - 2		841

Tuesday 19 June

GROUP A	RUSSIA	Score	EGYPT	# of Illegal Streams
		3 - 1		775

Wednesday 20 June

GROUP B	PORTUGAL	Score	MOROCCO	# of Illegal Streams
		1 - 0		780

Thursday 21 June

GROUP D	ARGENTINA	Score	CROATIA	# of Illegal Streams
		0 - 3		976
GROUP C	FRANCE	Score	PERU	# of Illegal Streams
		1 - 0		915

RESULTS PER MATCH

Saturday 23 June

GROUP F	GERMANY	Score	SWEDEN	# of Illegal Streams
		2 - 1		786

GROUP G	TUNISIA	Score	BELGIUM	# of Illegal Streams
		1 - 2		743

Thursday 26 June

GROUP D	ARGENTINA	Score	NIGERIA	# of Illegal Streams
		2 - 1		630

GROUP C	FRANCE	Score	DENMARK	# of Illegal Streams
		0 - 0		628

Wednesday 27 June

GROUP E	BRAZIL	Score	SERBIA	# of Illegal Streams
		2 - 0		914

Audience Measurement Figures

Since the beginning of the World Football Tournament, we have monitored a total of sixteen selected matches. The total number of illegal streams is more or less consistent with some peaks for the most popular events.

One important aspect for all broadcasters and content owners is the estimation of the audience measurement. Indeed, after reading our first Illegal Streaming Report, many of you asked us whether it was possible to measure the exact number of viewers behind each domain. This is certainly a complex topic. There is no standardized solution today for audience measurement; however, we are able to capture all figures available on all social networks and UGC platforms. The table below indicates the number of available views on the different platforms namely Facebook, YouTube and Periscope.

Date	Match Events	VIEWS on FACEBOOK	VIEWS on YOUTUBE	VIEWS on PERISCOPE
June 14	Russia- KSA	101 063	142 598	19 508
June 15	Portugal - Spain	190 122	35 100	40 744
June 16	France - Australia	72 412	28 515	45 959
June 17	Germany - Mexico	2 033 834	36 758	59 031
June 17	Brazil - Switzerland	743 111	88 215	12 424
June 18	Tunisia - England	618 585	30 628	84 478
June 19	Russia - Egypt	535 706	25 048	72 135
June 20	Portugal - Morocco	393 982	686 480	75 962
June 21	France - Peru	295 978	98 900	169 679
June 21	Argentina - Croatia	583 111	217 731	64 443
June 23	Belgium - Tunisia	321 471	62 926	63 458
June 23	Germany - Sweden	242 586	1 927	200 651
June 25	Spain - Morocco	365 582	117 787	76 937
June 26	Denmark - France	54 931	1 975	15 067
June 26	Nigeria - Argentina	606 430	10 180	65 708
June 27	Brazil - Serbia	199 784	34 150	22 459
June 28	Belgium- England	193 338	1 536 530	7 576
	TOTAL	7 552 026	3 155 448	1 096 219

These figures do not need in-depth explanations - they are significant on their own.
On these social networks platforms, the number of viewers reaches hundreds of thousands of illegal viewers for the most popular matches. Germany vs. Mexico was definitively the most viewed match with more than two million viewers on Facebook. On YouTube the number is close to 1,500,000 for Belgium vs. England.

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Closing down 100% of those links, something that is possible to achieve with our tool, thanks to our special agreement with the platform's partners, allows cleansing of a significant portion of the piracy landscape.

Twitch.tv: a new "enabler" of illegal streaming

Twitch, or Twitch.tv, is an official streaming and VOD service for video games, electronic sports and related programs, launched in 2011. The site was created as the site dedicated to the Justin.tv video games branch, which was the most popular part of the service.
With video games experiencing particularly strong growth, until they became the most popular category on the site, the company decided to create a separate entity "Twitch.tv".
The site officially launched in a public Beta version in 2011. Since then, it has attracted over 35 million unique visitors per month.

While monitoring most of the matches since the beginning of the tournament, we noticed that it was possible to access all of them on twitch.tv. Video game platforms are not heavily targeted in the current battle against online illegal streaming, but it appears that they play a major role there as well as an "enabler" of illegal streaming. As a cooperative platform, they could be easily addressed by tools like VO's Eye on Piracy Tool and all the notified player links could be removed.

THE ROLE OF VPN IN ILLEGAL STREAMING DELIVERY

In the context of OTT delivery, the use of Virtual Private Networks is quite often used to bypass geo-blocking and geo-fencing requirements. A VPN typically uses a "gateway" to access the outside world, which allows the apparent source IP address of its connections to be changed to the corresponding targeted country IP, thus allowing avoiding the geographical restrictions of certain services offered on the Internet.

This threat has been addressed recently by most of the content owners and sports leagues since the last World Football Tournament. They are nevertheless still widely used in recent events as demonstrated by this post.

This makes it more difficult for any service provider to identify the location of the transmitting computer. The VPN infrastructure (usually a server) contains enough information to identify the user: for example, companies offering free or paid VPNs can collect navigation data from their customers, which questions the anonymity of these services.

We have recently seen Netflix and other companies take anti-piracy actions that could lead to banning VPN users altogether, using IP blocking and other techniques. In the context of the World Football Tournament, social networks and forums exchange information on how users can access the tournament matches from various locations and do not hesitate to provide lists of unblocked VPNs providers. This indicates that piracy is not only supported, but encouraged by these social networks.

PART 2 – ONLINE RESPONSIBILITY

The question of who should be held responsible for what, where and when in the days of the Internet is certainly not a new question. The recent active role played by public bodies like the EU IPO, EUROPOL etc., or by private bodies fighting audio visual piracy or counterfeit, together with the alarming figures around these new forms of infringement of rights, have created more awareness among all the stakeholders. It has become evident that the notions of responsibility and liability, and their enforcement have to apply in the digital age as well.

The real challenge is to open the debate with each stakeholder in the chain, from the right owners to the consumers, without forgetting the distributors of the content, the ISPs, the platforms, the Ad servers, the payment providers and the OTT set top box suppliers for online piracy. It is critical that this topic be addressed very quickly; pointing fingers at certain stakeholders is not solving the issue. Inviting them to the discussion table so that each participant has a clear view of what they are getting into, what is their role online, and how they can interact is key. Once this is defined we'll be able to define each one's role, rights and liabilities.

Many debates are currently going on in Europe regarding the EU copyright reform which aims to adapt EU copyright rules to the digital environment. Many issues are still being discussed, among them:

- Protection of press publications

- The so-called "value gap" (the difference between the remuneration received by the authors and performers, and the profit made by internet platforms when they make their work accessible)

- Improved cooperation between right holders and online platforms

- The latest controversial overhaul of this EU's copyright reform putting more responsibility on websites to enforce copyright laws. This means, that as per Article 13, any online platform that allows users to post text, images, sounds or code would need a way to assess and filter content has engendered a fierce debate between internet giants and content creators; it was rejected on July, 5 by the European Parliament by a margin of 318-278.

The role of ISP is also very often questioned; we have chosen to give the floor to Romain Beeckman, from OVH, a European Cloud and Infrastructure Service Provider.

An Interview with Romain Beeckman, Anti-Piracy Director, OVH

We have asked Romain Beeckman, Anti-Piracy Director at OVH, to tell us more about illegal streaming and ways to combat piracy.

ROMAIN, CAN YOU INTRODUCE YOUR COMPANY?

As an ISP, we offer several kinds of services (from the domain name, the mail platform, the website hosting, to the complex cloud infrastructure) to our 1.4 million customers worldwide. We are one of the largest IaaS providers in the world, therefore we provide unmanaged, dedicated infrastructure to our customers, who are mostly companies and businesses. They can build added-value products from our IaaS building blocks, so as to offer to their own users and customers any kind of services such as storage solutions, games servers, emailing platforms, VPS (virtual private services), hosting services and more.

HOW DO YOU WORK WITH COPYRIGHT OWNERS ON STRUGGLING PIRACY?

Because of the scale of our network (we have close to 3 million IP addresses), we receive reports for any kinds of fraudulent activities such as spamming, DDoS attacks, phishing, malware, and of course, copyright infringements.

To ensure the more efficient results of our abuse team, we try to identify reliable partners so we can create a direct and dedicated relationship. As IaaS services are very specific, it is important to spend time with copyright owners to explain what we do, and what our current legal framework is.

At the same time as we improve the common understanding, we have a more successful impact on struggling piracy activities. For the last few years, we have had the opportunity to discuss several business associations; we usually create a dedicated point of contact and explain more in detail how we will process their reports. As we do not offer managed solutions, the role of our customer is key. They are the sole administrator of the infrastructure and therefore are the only ones able to directly take down the fraudulent content.

As copyright owners do not always have the possibility to identify our customers and contact them directly, they have to contact us first as the ISP.

On our side, we do not have the capability of removing any specific content on a server; we only can implement a single one action which consists of suspending the whole infrastructure. As our customers are using our services for their own business, such actions would generate massive collateral effect. It is also our role to give them time, so they can take actions towards their own customers or users.

We try to ensure that our customers behave responsibly and take actions when a report is legitimate. We educate them, so they comply with take down notices. We do not hesitate to take strong actions such as terminations of their services when they do not react or deliberately ignore our reports.

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER AS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FOR AN ISP WHEN WE TALK ABOUT PIRACY?

As a large IaaS provider, we have to deal with a large amount of reports per day, we have a dedicated abuse form available on our websites, but most of these complaints are still sent by email to our generic email address abuse@ovh.net.

That does not help to ensure good processing of these reports as we have to cope with very different formats and standards. The key in our industry is automation, so the only option that we can consider is to standardize the way people report to us by using generic templates. Format such as X-ARF is a very good solution that allows us to parse the body of the mails and identify the services and customers behind these reports in an automatic manner.
The more automation we can implement, the faster we will be able to contact our customer and the sooner the content will be removed.

We are members of ISPs business associations and the question of a standard format or even a standard API is also a concern for all of us. We have regular workshops about this topic and we hope to be able to share with copyright owner's community the results of our discussions. That will be a great step forward for both industries.

At the same time, we have seen a real change in the way live sport events are streamed. With the increase of OTT boxes and IPTV Packages, it becomes difficult for an ISP to confirm that its services are fraudulently used to stream. This is why it is so important for us to create a direct relationship with copyright owners, so they can adapt their reports to our requirements. Therefore, we often have to ask them for additional logs, screenshots etc. so that we can use them as legal evidence if we have to terminate the contracts of a reluctant customer.

PART 3 – ONLINE COUNTERFEIT

Piracy is not the sole intellectual property infringement online. Counterfeit and pirated trade is a global and dynamic phenomenon, originating like piracy from all economies on all continents — all segments are targeted.

A study led in 2016 by the EU Intellectual Property Office (Trade In Counterfeit and Pirated Goods; Mapping the Economic Impact) has offered a unique analysis in that respect and estimates that in 2013 the international trade of such products represented up to 2.5% of world trade, or as much as USD 461 billion. This is the equivalent of the GDP in Austria!

We wanted to see if online counterfeit could have some common ground with online piracy. We have investigated the situation with Julien Serres, CEO of Paris-based anti-counterfeit specialist, Insiders Corp.

An Interview with Julien Serres, CEO of Insiders Corp

JULIEN, DO WE SEE A PROGRESSION IN THE SALE OF COUNTERFEIT PRODUCTS ONLINE DURING THE FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT IN RUSSIA?

Online sales of counterfeit products during the Tournament have just exploded.
The focus is on the sale of fake jerseys of the national teams. We believe that the number of online sales has increased tenfold in the three months preceding the event.

Then come all the FIFA stamped products, for instance you find a lot of fake trophies, mugs or T-shirts. Most of the time, the FIFA logo is used without any authorization, either by sites desirous to benefit from the event, or worse, by sites intending to swindle naive Internet users by proposing fake tickets or hospitality packages.

WHO ARE THE AUTHORS OF SUCH ILLEGAL SALES?

Fake team shirts come from China, Pakistan and Turkey. They are transported by road, entering Europe via the Ukraine and the Balkan countries. Big Taiwanese industrial companies are behind this trade, promoting the shirts on all key online sites from Taiwan, where trademark protection is weak.

But they are not the only ones; you have also a lot of opportunistic manufacturers, producing UEFA, FIFA and Roland Garros jerseys, as per the demand. This second category mainly sells via B2B platforms.

The third category is made up of multiple smaller resellers, selling with an important margin the products that they have bought themselves from Indonesian or Chinese online platforms.

WHAT ARE THE MEASURES TAKEN BY THE RIGHT HOLDERS TO FIGHT AGAINST THESE ONLINE SALES?

Most of the sport equipment providers or the national and international sport leagues have automated detection and fraud notification programs. Some of them can dereference above one million links per year and succeed in having hundreds of sites closed each year. In the longer term, they try to negotiate filters with the biggest social network platforms so as to proactively prevent online infringing ads. In parallel, right holders create a lot of awareness with national and international authorities in order to get more favorable legislation, permitting efficient actions.

IS THERE A LINK BETWEEN ALL THESE ONLINE SALES AND THE ILLEGAL STREAMING SITES?

We have tried in the course of this tournament and during other events involving League 1 clubs to identify if there is a link between counterfeit online sales and streaming sites. So far this is not obvious; we did not detect any advertisement for fake products on the illegal streaming sites despite the fact that they get most of their revenues from advertisements. We have not yet detected a clear connection between of illegal streaming sites and counterfeit sites.
It is clear however, that convergence could happen with the growing illegal live streaming on social networks, as social networks are widely used by suppliers of fake products.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT CHALLENGES FOR RIGHTS HOLDERS?

Both FIFA and sports equipment manufacturers have to deal with the proliferation of mobile marketplaces: these offer great flexibility for counterfeiters. On a geolocated basis and/or social networks, they trigger flash sales. An efficient solution has the ability to monitor these new sales channels. Blurring of the images is another challenge but incorporating artificial intelligence tools enables detection of blurred or distorted images.

WHEN YOU LOOK AT OUR TOP 5 LOCATION DOMAINS OR ISPS HOSTING SUCH DOMAINS, ARE THERE SOME COMMON POINTS?

Yes, definitively, the ISP Quasi Networks (Netherlands) and Private Layers (Switzerland) belong to our Top 5 of the worst ISPs as well. This is true for all fake products, from luxury goods, to sport, to perfumes, alcohol and similar products. These ISPs refuse to cooperate and host huge volumes of sites, especially for the second type, they probably host above one thousand sites.

About Insiders

Julien Serres is President and Co-Founder of Insiders. Insiders offer a global range of solutions in the fight against counterfeiting, and protection of brand and distribution networks, both online and offline.

Conclusion

It is very interesting to see from the above interview above that those involved in the fight against online illegal streaming or counterfeit are confronted with the same challenges. Here again, joining forces between product right holders and content right owners can only benefit both sides. In this report we have analyzed the statistics from additional first-round games and also looked at topics surrounding online responsibility and the effects of counterfeiting online.

Our third report will look at the final games and how illegal websites and content farms use social media to promote their activity, times and areas of peak piracy activity, and other interesting facts and figures. We will also present an infographic with a summary of pirate links detected, top 5 link hoster domains, top 5 ISPs, audience estimates and additional drill-downs and insights.

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