

# Cybersecurity Case Study #2

Title: GitHub's Battle Against the Largest DDoS Attack

## Introduction

GitHub, a platform where developers collaborate on projects, experienced an extraordinary event on Wednesday, February 28, 2018, at around 12:15 pm EST. A massive wave of traffic, 1.35 terabits per second, hit the website, marking the most powerful distributed denial of service (DDoS) attack ever recorded. Surprisingly, this attack did not require a botnet.

## The Attack and Initial Response

A DDoS attack is like a digital traffic jam, where a website gets flooded with so much traffic that it can't handle it all, causing it to slow down or even stop working. In this case, GitHub faced a digital storm. For a few minutes, the website struggled with outages, but then it called for help from its DDoS mitigation service, Akamai Prolexic. Prolexic acted as a shield, routing all the traffic coming in and out of GitHub. It sent the data through special cleaning centers to separate and block the bad traffic from the good.

## Comparing to Previous Attacks

The attack was significantly larger than a similar attack that happened in 2016 against an internet infrastructure company called Dyn. That attack reached 1.2 terabits per second and caused connectivity issues across the United States. However, this time, the good guys were prepared.

## Defending Against the Attack

Akamai defended against the attack in several ways. In addition to Prolexic's general DDoS defense infrastructure, the company had also recently implemented specific defenses for a type of DDoS attack that comes from something called memcached servers. These servers are like digital librarians that help speed up networks and websites by remembering and quickly providing information. However, they're not supposed to be exposed on the public internet, where anyone can access them.

## The Role of Memcached Servers

Unfortunately, about 100,000 memcached servers were exposed online without any protection. This meant that an attacker could access them and send them a special command, which the server would respond to with a much larger reply. This is like asking a librarian a simple question and getting a truckload of books in response!

## Amplification Attacks

Unlike other DDoS attacks that use botnets (networks of infected computers) to flood websites with traffic, memcached DDoS attacks don't need a botnet. Instead, attackers just pretend to be their victim by using their victim's IP address and send small requests to multiple memcached

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