FENDING OFF HACKER ATTACKS

Valley IT firms protect clients from an economic threat 'exponentially larger than the damage inflicted from natural disasters.'

By **MARK R. MADLER** *Staff Reporter*

On a recent morning, **George Baldonado** was monitoring online activity for a client – a government contractor in the Los Angeles area – at his Camarillo business, **Oasis Technology**, which provides IT consulting and security software.

That client had 120 cyber terrorist attacks, Baldonado said, and another 3,800 attempts to get into its network from outside the U.S.

All this occurred before 10:30 a.m.

"There was one attack trying to break into the firewall and there had been 245 attacks into their Office 365 to try to get into their email," he explained.

That goes to show just how serious hackers are to get into the computer networks of companies big and small. Professionals in the cybersecurity industry in the greater San Fernando Valley region all have similar stories of attacks that have happened to clients.

Take, for example, what happened to **Yuri Aberfeld**.

The chief executive of **ITSupportLA. com**, a Tarzana tech support company, knows personally the feeling when a hacker finds a cybersecurity breach.

Aberfeld said that in 2019, hackers created a website very similar to his, except that it was ITSuportLA.com, with just one "p."

The fake site began to contact vendors in the information technology industry and place orders that were then put through by those companies, Aberfeld said.

"Then they would call us for payment, and we would have to explain that it wasn't us and they had got scammed," he added.

Everything about the fake website mirrored the actual website of Aberfeld's company except for a change in the phone number.

"I even called one time and said, 'Who is this?' and the person said, 'This is Yuri.' I said, 'No, this is Yuri,' and the person hung

up," Aberfeld said. "The audacity is just crazy to me."

But hackers steal, from Aberfeld and Baldonado's clients alike, because it pays.

According to **Cybersecurity Ventures**, a research and publishing firm in Northport N.Y., cybercrimes will inflict a total of $6 trillion in damages globally in 2021 and increase to $10.5 trillion by 2025. That figure was only $3 trillion in 2015.

"This represents the greatest transfer pf economic wealth in history, risks the incentives for innovation and investment, is exponentially larger than the damage inflicted