

Stolen U.S. data being sold

COMPUTER EQUIPMENT TAKEN FROM AIR BASE IS SHOWING UP IN MARKETS IN AFGHANISTAN

By Paul Watson
Los Angeles Times

BAGRAM, Afghanistan — A computer drive sold openly Wednesday in a bazaar outside the U.S. air base holds what appears to be a trove of potentially sensitive U.S. intelligence data, including the names, photos and telephone numbers of Afghan spies informing on the Taliban and Al-Qaida.

The flash memory drive, which a teenager sold for \$40, has scores of military documents marked "secret," describing intelligence-gathering methods and information — including escape routes in to Pakistan and the location of a suspected safe house, and \$50 bounties paid for each Taliban or Al-Qaida fighter apprehended based on the source's intelligence.

The documents appear to be authentic, but the accuracy of the information could not be independently verified.

On its face, the information seems to jeopardize the safety of intelligence sources working secretly for U.S. special forces in Afghanistan, which would constitute a serious breach of security. For that reason, the Los Angeles Times has withheld personal

information and details that could compromise military operations.

U.S. commanders in Afghanistan said an investigation was under way into what shopkeepers at the bazaar describe as ongoing theft and resale of U.S. computer equipment from Bagram. The base is the center of intelligence-gathering activities and includes a detention center for suspected Al-Qaida and terror suspects flown in from around the world.

"Members of the Army's Criminal Investigation Command are conducting an investigation into potential criminal activity," a statement said.

The top U.S. commander, Lt. Gen. Karl Eikenberry, has ordered a review of policies and procedures relating to the accountability of computer hardware and software.

"Coalition officials regularly survey bazaars across Afghanistan for the presence of contraband materials, but thus far have not uncovered sensitive or classified items," the statement said.

The credibility and reliability of some intelligence sources identified in the documents are marked as unknown. Oth-



SHOAIB AMIN — ASSOCIATED PRESS

Street merchants were selling flash drives, some holding sensitive data, stolen from the U.S. base in Bagram, Afghanistan, this week.

er operatives, however, appear to be of high importance, including one whose information, the document says, led to the apprehension of seven Al-Qaida suspects in the United States.

One document describes a source as having "people working for him" in 11 Afghan cities. "The potential for success with this contact is unlimited," the report says.

Even the names of people identified as the sources' wives and children are listed — details that could put them at risk of retaliation by insurgents who have boasted about executing dozens of people suspected of spying for U.S.

forces.

Numerous files indicate the flash drive may have belonged to a member of the Army's 7th Special Forces Group, based at Fort Bragg, N.C. The unit is operating in southern Afghanistan, where a U.S.-led coalition is battling a growing insurgency.

Some of the computer files are dated as recently as this month, while others date to 2004. The shop clerk who sold the computer drive said an Afghan worker smuggled it out of Bagram base Tuesday, a day after the Los Angeles Times first reported that military secrets were available at several shops in the bazaar.

IN BRIEF

NEPAL

U.S. closes consulate after deadly protests

The U.S. Embassy announced the closing of its consular section in Katmandu and canceled a congressional delegation's visit this week, as a fourth Nepali was killed during pro-democracy protests in the southern region of the country, according to a political party that called for the demonstrations.

Three others have been killed since Saturday, during what have been the most violent and sustained protests demanding the restoration of parliamentary rule in Nepal. King Gyanendra, who seized control of the government 14 months ago in a bid, he said, to crush a Maoist rebellion, is expected to address the nation Friday.

State-owned Nepal Television said Wednesday that 3,000 people had been arrested over the past week and that a third of them remained in custody.

PAKISTAN

Karachi riots continue into second day

Youths rioted in Karachi for a second day Wednesday to protest a suicide bombing that

killed 56 people, Pakistani officials aimed at "eliminating leadership of a radical Muslim group."

Police confirmed and identified a suicide bomber who killed an 11-year-old Sunni dignitary in Karachi park Tuesday during service with ships.

The service was led by moderate Sunni clerics, including the Tehrik-e-Millat leader whose top two leaders were among the dead.

JAPAN

North Korea to promise meetings

A barrage of promises in meetings in Japan Wednesday led to a commitment by North Korea to return to talks on denuclearization, officials said Wednesday.

Representatives from the United States, China, Russia, and the two Koreas — met in meetings on Tuesday in hopes of reviving academic conferences in hopes of reviving negotiations.

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