Industrial Espionage (2):
Further Methods

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In the first article in this series, I reviewed some of the information in the annual reports of the National Counterintelligence Center (NACIC) and later the Office of the National Counterintelligence Executive (ONCIX). Here I continue with additional methods of industrial espionage from later research.

The 2000 NACIC added these methods:

- Requesting information through e-mail or letters, including apparent responses to advertising or trade show exhibits.
- Exploiting Internet discussion groups, especially research-oriented list servers.

A survey organized by NACIC among about a dozen Fortune 500 company officers [2000 p. 16] extended the list of industrial espionage methods with the following approaches:

- Breaking away from tour groups
- Attempting access after normal working hours
- Supplying different personnel at the last minute for agreed-upon projects
- Theft of laptops
- Customs holding laptops for a period of time
- Social gatherings
- Dumpster® diving (searching through trash and discarded materials)
- Interception of nonencrypted Internet messages.

I want to make it clear that the NACIC/ONCIX authors and I, as a writer reporting on their findings are _not_ implying that foreign nationals and foreign-born citizens in this country are inherently threats to national security. The vast majority of such people – and I am one myself, having been born in Canada and having been granted US citizenship in July of this year – are honest, loyal people who have never done anything against the interests of our country. The US Census Bureau reports that in 2004, there were over 34 million foreign-born residents <http://tinyurl.com/dsans> out of a total population estimated at over 293 million (MS-Excel file from <http://tinyurl.com/9qyw2>). So even if we guessed there were a thousand foreign-born spies (a high estimate for which there is no factual basis whatsoever), that number would represent a mere 0.003% of the foreign-born population – leaving 99.997% as unworthy of suspicion. So the next time someone tries to convince you that purely ethnic profiling divorced from any study of individual behavior is a good idea for law enforcement and national security, do a similar calculation with them and calculate the costs of resources wasted on false-positives.

The NACIC/ONCIX reports are clear on the threat from purely domestic, All-American citizens: "In 1996, the FBI and ASIS also reaffirmed the increase in the reporting of domestic theft or misappropriation of proprietary economic information. An ASIS special report released in

In the next article in this series, I’ll review some striking cases of industrial espionage in the decade before now.

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