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### Hacker Who Broke Into NASA Computers Freed

From: [Stig\\_Agermose@online.pol.dk](mailto:Stig_Agermose@online.pol.dk) (Stig Agermose)  
Date: Mon, 24 Nov 1997 07:32:59 +0200  
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Subject: Hacker Who Broke Into NASA Computers Freed

Full story

Hacker who broke into Nasa walks free

The Times of London

Sat, Nov 22 1997

Prosecutors say case was no threat to security, writes Stephen Farrell.

A COMPUTER hacker charged with breaking into United States Air Force computers causing damage estimated at Pounds 300,000 walked free from court yesterday.

Mathew Bevan, 23, smiled as he left Belmarsh Crown Court, southeast London, with representatives of a tabloid newspaper six months after a London teenager, Richard Pryce, was fined Pounds 1,200 for admitting similar offences.

Prosecutors decided it was not in the public interest to pursue a costly case expected to last up to three months involving witnesses flown from America to give evidence against Bevan, the son of a Fraud Squad detective.

The decision comes three and a half years after two hackers codenamed Kuji and Datastream Cowboy used the Internet to penetrate Rome Laboratories, the US Air Force's premier command and control research facility at Griffiss Base in New York.

Sources close to the US investigation said the intrusions had "serious implications" but did not involve national security. According to a report to the US Senate Affairs Committee the intruders gained access in March 1994 to unclassified files held at Nasa's Goddard Space Flight Centre and computers belonging to Lockheed.

Pryce, then 16, from Colindale, North London, who went on to win a scholarship to study the double bass at the Royal College of Music, was fined after he admitted 12 charges of gaining unauthorised access under the Computer Misuse Act. Magistrates were told he "caused more harm than the KGB".

Another institution allegedly penetrated by the pair was Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio, where wilder elements among UFO conspiracy theorists believe alien spacecraft are secretly held.

Bevan, who cheerfully acknowledges being obsessed with aliens, nevertheless denied three charges of gaining unwarranted access to USAF

and Lockheed computers between March and May 1994.

The charges related to the alteration of data by the alleged insertion of a "sniffer" program designed to gain access to systems.

The investigation was carried out by Scotland Yard's Computer Crime Unit and the US Air Force's Office of Special Investigations (OSI). Initial charges of conspiracy against the pair were dropped at an earlier hearing.

Pony-tailed Bevan, an X Files addict, obsessed with UFOs, lived a twin existence and saw himself as the Nick Leeson of the hacking world.

An Admiral Insurance computer operator by day, at night he sat beneath posters of his fictional FBI heroes, Mulder and Scully, hacking around the world as real-life American investigators on his electronic trail suspected him of being one of the most sophisticated and dangerous hackers they had ever encountered.

In an interview with The Times Bevan admitted gaining access to computers belonging to the US Air Force, Nasa and the defence contractors Lockheed, but adamantly denied ever altering data.

He insists his motive was curiosity, not personal gain. "I was after information about UFOs. I just wanted to find evidence of all the conspiracy theories - alien abductions, the 1947 Roswell landings and Nasa faking the moon landings - and where better to look than their computer files?" he said. "The US Air Force posts details of its personnel and network addresses on the Internet so anything you want you can get if you know how. It was a challenge."

One source close to the American investigation, however, said: "At one stage they were connected to Latvia and the South Korean Atomic Research Institute, which raised serious concerns about the former Eastern Bloc and information warfare." Bevan was 12 when he was given a Sinclair ZX81 for Christmas from his parents, Elaine, a nurse, and Thomas, a detective sergeant with the South Wales Fraud Squad.

Despite spending up to 36 hours at a time on the keyboard the family telephone bills never exceeded Pounds 60 because he mastered the technique of "blue-boxing", gaining free calls by sending electronic pulses down the line to trick BT software into thinking a call was over. His Holy Grail was to prove that alien spacecraft are stored in conditions of strict secrecy at Area 51 of Wright Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio - as suggested in the film Independence Day . Although he claims to have seen convincing evidence of their presence, no evidence is forthcoming.

Pryce was arrested at his parents home in Colindale in May 1994 and Bevan in June last year. All his equipment was seized, leading, he admits, to withdrawal symptoms. "It is all about control, really. I'm in my little room with my little computer breaking into the biggest computers in the world and suddenly I have more control over this machine than them. That is where the buzz comes from. Anyone who says they are a reformed hacker is talking rubbish. If you are a hacker, you are always a hacker. It's a state of mind."

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