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Personnel Security and Leaking

Editor

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Abstract: The author discusses the impact of leaks on the viability of security organizations.

The sine qua non of personnel security is selecting and managing people so that they comply with security policies, programs, rules, and laws. One main purpose of all these security activities is to protect classified, proprietary, or otherwise sensitive information from being transmitted to adversaries, competitors, and all others without a need to know. Yet security compliance is often ignored or discounted through the intentional leaking of information to the mass media.

Leaking occurs for several reasons—to help advance a policy, program, rule, law, or point of view; to help reject or impede the same; to help advance someone's material, psychological, and even spiritual desires; and to help reject or impede the same. The sense of entitlement that leads to the intentional compliance violation exemplified by leaking is difficult to validate because one may be wrong in the comparative goodness and badness of its consequences, intrinsic nature, or the intentions that set the sense of entitlement in motion. Even more importantly, the leaking necessarily weakens the very cohesive and centripetal dynamics that support security compliance of all people in an organization expected to be compliant.

A senior fellow at the Council of Foreign Relations (Frye, 2003) has suggested that leaks elicited by a mass media representative often serve the public interest, while leaks initiated by "self-serving antagonists in the political process....rarely serve the public interest." In actuality, both are serving their respective selves and both are weakening personnel security regardless of other consequences. When all in an organization know that all may be leaking as well as wrongly transmitting information to adversaries, competitors, and all others without a need to know, a viable personnel security program becomes but a chimera. Save for carefully thought out disinformation and misinformation initiatives, as well as just blind luck, the security challenge becomes that much greater. (See Frye, A. (October 22, 2003.) Let someone else do the talking. *The New York Times*, p. A27; Gerrad, J. (2002). A sense of entitlement: Vicissitudes of working with "special" patients. *British Journal of Psychotherapy*, 19, 173-188; Mullen, P.E. (2002). Moral principles don't signify. *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology*, 9, 19-21; Witte, T. H., Callahan, K. L., & Perez-Lopez, M. (2002). Narcissism and anger: An exploration of underlying correlates. *Psychological Reports*, 90, 871-875.)