

UK police foil massive bank theft

Police in London say they have foiled one of the biggest attempted bank thefts in Britain.

The plan was to steal £220m (\$423m) from the London offices of the Japanese bank Sumitomo Mitsui.

Computer experts are believed to have tried to transfer the money electronically after hacking into the bank's systems.

A man has been arrested by police in Israel after the plot was uncovered by the National Hi-Tech Crime Unit.

Unit members worked closely with Israeli police.

The investigation was started last October after it was discovered that computer hackers had gained access to Sumitomo Mitsui bank's computer system in London.

They managed to infiltrate the system with [keylogging software](#) that would have enabled them to track every button pressed on computer keyboards.

Cyber warning

From that they could learn account numbers, passwords and other sensitive information.

Yeron Bolondi, 32, was seized in Israel after an attempt to transfer £13.9m into an account there.

" We have undertaken various measures in terms of security and we have not suffered any financial damage "

Takashi Morita
Sumitomo Mitsui

He has been charged with money laundering and deception, but police say their investigation is continuing. His relationship with the gang who tried to break into the network is unknown.

They have issued a warning for banks and businesses to watch out for cyber criminals.

The National Hi-Tech Crime Unit was launched in April 2001 with responsibility for tracking down the growing range of criminals who operate in cyberspace.

Takashi Morita, head of communications at Sumitomo Mitsui in Tokyo, said the company had not suffered any financial loss as a consequence of the robbery attempt.

He said: "The case is still in the middle of investigation so we cannot comment further.

"We have undertaken various measures in terms of security and we have not suffered any financial damage."

" This will be discussed by chief executives and others for some time to come and it will further reinforce the need for corporate asset protection systems "

Richard Starnes
Computer security expert

Richard Starnes, president of the Information Security Services Association, said: "We have been talking about the doomsday scenario for quite some time and while this was not actualised it shows the magnitude of the threat to companies."

He told the BBC News Website: "This will be discussed by chief executives and others for some time to come and it will further reinforce the need for corporate asset protection systems."

Mr Starnes, who works for Cable & Wireless, said key logging software - which detects every key stroke made by a keyboard and can give away crucial information such as passwords - was easy to obtain and quite simple to insert into a company's computers.

He said: "This is the arms race of this era. Police and criminals are constantly trying to stay one step ahead of each other."

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