UC SANTA BARBARA

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Gail Gallessich

FBI AGENTS VISIT UCSB TO COLLECT DATA FROM HACKER ATTACK

Two FBI agents made a scheduled visit to the University of California, Santa Barbara Tuesday to collect information about the computer that was electronically broken into last week and used in the attack on CNN's website.

Kevin Schmidt, campus network programmer for UC Santa Barbara, met with the agents (one from Santa Maria, Calif. and the other from Ventura, Calif.) for more than two hours. He provided them with a chronology and a summary of information. He also gave them a CD-ROM with records and evidence.

The computer that was illegally used by hackers is still on campus and will go back into service in the near future. Schmidt replaced the disk drive Tuesday and removed the old disk drive containing all the information about the break-in.

The university has been in contact with the FBI since last Wednesday, February 9, the morning after Schmidt found an abnormality in the university's computer traffic. In addition to telephone calls and electronic mail, the university cooperated with the FBI by sending computer files in an encrypted form over the Internet.

Schmidt's meeting with the FBI was held the same day as President Bill Clinton's White House summit on Internet security, called in response to hacker attacks on many popular websites last week.

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(Santa Barbara, Calif.) A desktop computer in a research lab at the University of California, Santa Barbara was electronically broken into by a computer hacker sometime before Tuesday night, when traces of the attack were first noticed by the university's campus network programmer, Kevin Schmidt.

The computer was used in a "denial of service" attack on CNN's website, according to Schmidt. "There is no indication that the attack came from anyone in the university," said Schmidt. Schmidt noticed an abnormality in the university's computer traffic when he checked remotely from home near midnight on Tuesday night. He ran an overnight check and on Wednesday morning contacted CNN to tell them that a UC, Santa Barbara computer was involved in their denial of service.

CNN then contacted the FBI and since that time Schmidt has been assisting the FBI in its investigation.

"Free exchange of information is the heart of a university, both in research and teaching," said Robert Sugar, professor of physics and chair of the Information Technology Board. "They've attacked us in a way that hurts what we do as a university, and hurts all universities." He explained that it obstructs university business.

"We work hard to plug the known holes," said Sugar. "But this is an extraordinarily difficult job. We can never make the network 100 percent secure. To attempt to would interfere with the university's research and instruction. There are large numbers of students, faculty and staff who don't live on campus, but need access to university computers. It's a thin line we are walking; we want

our computers to be secure, but we don't want to interfere with the work of students, researchers and staff."

Sugar explained that the attacks put a damper on research and discovery. "What we're really supposed to be doing is research and instruction, not preventing attacks," he said.

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leader in computer science and 30 years ago was one of the first four nodes of ARPANET, the precursor to the Internet.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.