



Jareh Sebastian Dalke

- Employed by the National Security Agency for only 4 weeks
- Resigned after extended leave was not granted
- Previously served in U.S. Army as a Health Care Specialist
- Age 32 at time of sentencing



CDSE
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CASE STUDY

Attempted Espionage

WHAT HAPPENED

Jareh Sebastian Dalke is a former U.S. Army enlisted soldier who worked as a civilian Information Systems Security Designer at the National Security Agency (NSA). Dalke held a Top Secret clearance and maintained access to Sensitive Compartmented Information.

Dalke began working at the NSA on June 6, 2022, and shortly thereafter requested a 9-month leave of absence to help a family member with a medical condition. On June 28, 2022, after his extended leave request was denied, Dalke submitted his resignation and was officially terminated on July 1, 2022. However, during his short tenure, Dalke printed and improperly retained three classified documents.

In August 2022, Dalke began using an encrypted email account to communicate with an individual he believed to be a Russian agent. Unbeknownst to Dalke, the "Russian agent" was a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) online covert employee.

Stating he was in financial need and had a desire to cause change, Dalke transmitted excerpts of three classified documents, all of which contained National Defense Information (NDI) and were classified as Top Secret/Sensitive Compartmented Information. Dalke noted these were just a "small sample of what is possible."

After receiving cryptocurrency worth approximately \$16,500, Dalke requested \$85,000 in return for all the information currently in his possession. Preparations were made for Dalke to transmit the complete classified documents via a secure digital connection, which would be made available for 4 hours at a public venue.

On September 28, the same day he had accepted an offer of re-employment with the NSA, Dalke traveled to the predetermined site. Moments after the files were transmitted, he was arrested by the FBI.

Dalke pleaded guilty on October 23, 2023, to six counts of attempting to transmit classified NDI to an agent of the Russian Federation. He was sentenced to 262 months in prison.

INDICATORS

Financial Considerations – Dalke was experiencing significant financial difficulties, including debts exceeding \$237,000. Approximately \$93,000 of this debt was "coming due very soon." He previously filed for Chapter 7 Bankruptcy in 2018.

Health/Medical Stressors – Dalke's request for extended leave due to "family illness," if legitimate, would indicate significant personal stress.

Information Handling – Dalke was employed only 11 days before he began to print classified material.

IMPACT

- The documents Dalke improperly retained and transmitted to a “Russian agent” were related to foreign military capabilities, updates to a U.S. cryptographic program, and threat assessments related to sensitive U.S. defense capabilities. According to FBI Denver Special Agent in Charge Mark Michalek, “If Dalke had been successful, the repercussions would have been severe.”
- “This defendant, who had sworn an oath to defend our country, believed he was selling classified national security information to a Russia agent, when in fact, he was outing himself to the FBI,” said Attorney General Merrick B. Garland. “This sentence demonstrates that those who seek to betray our country will be held accountable for their crimes.”

ADDITIONAL

- Dalke told the “Russian agent,” “I recently learned that my heritage ties back to your country, which is part of why I have come to you as opposed to others.”
- Dalke also stated he originally applied to the NSA because he “questioned our role in damage to the world in the past and by mixture of curiosity for secrets and a desire to cause change (*sic*).”
- Dalke noted he had access beyond what he should “due to a misconfiguration in the system.” He described the information as relating to foreign targeting of U.S. systems and information on cyber operations, as well as other topics.
- Not long after his resignation, Dalke re-applied to the NSA. On September 28, 2022, less than 3 months after his original termination, Dalke was offered and accepted a new position at the same NSA facility. However, his plans were cut short when he was arrested later that day.

Questions to Consider:

- Within days of entering the NSA workforce, Dalke began printing and improperly retaining documents. What policies does your organization have to identify and address ill-intentioned new hires?
- What steps does your organization take to ensure the principles of “least privilege”?

Resources for further exploration:

- Understanding Espionage and National Security Crimes Job Aid
(<https://www.cdse.edu/Portals/124/Documents/jobaids/ci/ci-jobaidseries-understandingespionage.pdf>)
- Insider Threat Potential Risk Indicators (PRI) Job Aid
(<https://www.cdse.edu/Portals/124/Documents/jobaids/insider/INTJ0181-insider-threat-indicators-job-aid.pdf>)
- Insider Threat Mitigation Guide
(https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-11/Insider%20Threat%20Mitigation%20Guide_Final_508.pdf)

Supporting Through Reporting!

Contact the appropriate POC to report any observed potential risk indicators:

Name: _____
Title: Supervisor/Security Officer/ITP

Agency/Department: _____
Senior Official/ITP Manager