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METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE

Security Incident SIR/6/16 (report date 18th January 2016)

Subject - Damaged archive boxes leading to exposure of Secret SC&O material

BAND B2

Report by [REDACTED] following investigation by [REDACTED] (Records Management)

BAND C4

Background

DI 4

BAND B2

On 6th January 2016 ADI [REDACTED] SCO35(10) raised a serious issue with [REDACTED] of MethHQ Records Management.

DI 4

ADI [REDACTED] was very concerned with the strength and integrity of the TNT boxes supplied for the archiving of sensitive and Secret material.

He has recently ordered back six boxes from TNT to test the delivery system and also to spot check that correct archiving protocols have been followed by SCO staff. Of six boxes recalled from TNT, all were damaged. Five of these were damaged so much, that their contents may have been open to inspection/compromise by either TNT or Transport Services staff.

DI 4

ADI [REDACTED] is now naturally concerned, that despite the assurances of both TNT and RMB, the boxes and archiving systems in place are not adequate to cover SECRET material.

DI 4

BAND B2

ADI [REDACTED] informed his OCU Commander and Commander Intelligence due to the potential risk. [REDACTED] raised this as a security incident with METHQ Security and initiated an investigation led by [REDACTED] to ascertain potential causes of the failure and to recommend corrective action.

BAND C4

Investigation Findings [REDACTED]

BAND C4

Of the 6 boxes recalled 2 had side seams which were split. The boxes may have possibly been overloaded, but not significantly enough to have caused this damage. 2 have been resealed using clear sticky tape and one has had the base repaired using brown parcel tape.

The boxes pass through many hands:

1. The OCU staff/officer fills the box, marks the box with information for putting away.
2. A staff member then transports the box from the OCU to the post room.
3. MPS porters handle the boxes at each stage of transfer.

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4. The boxes are transferred via scheduled van runs to SSS-Logistics to [REDACTED]
5. New business forms for TNT are created by SSS at [REDACTED] and appended to boxes.
6. The boxes are packed on pallets and plastic wrapped at [REDACTED] by SSS and are loaded onto lorries for transfer to TNT ([REDACTED] for Secret and Confidential - [REDACTED] for restricted).
7. They are then taken off pallets by TNT staff, logged and put into storage
8. Box recalls are managed through SSS-Hendon repository and are loaded onto the lorry and transported to MPS [REDACTED] SSS-Logistics
10. The boxes are then despatched on MPS delivery vans to the requesting officer

It is difficult to ascertain, where the damage has taken place and who has made the repairs to the boxes, with all parties denying any knowledge. TNT have given assurances that if they identify a damaged box, they replace it.

With no clear evidence of where the damage occurred, what is important is the learning outcomes from this. These are:

1. Staff and officers need better understanding of maximum box load 15kgs
2. Secret material needs to be housed in stronger boxes
3. Damaged boxes need to be reported back to the OCU at the time of damage being noted so that the OCU can deal with the material.

Next steps:-

OTH 2

1. Liaise with TNT [REDACTED] to see if we can purchase stronger TNT boxes (preferably ones with metal seams) and which can be ratchet sealed.
2. Obtain sample boxes which can be shown to SC&O and determine if these are more suited to their business needs.
3. Once agreement on box type reached - all the existing boxes will be recalled to a secure location and re-housed into the new boxes.
4. Shared Support Services staff will be briefed by Records management on handling practice for TNT material and corrective action process if a damaged box is identified.

TNT Security Review

In October 2015, MethQ Records Management initiated a security review of TNT [REDACTED] to check the site and processes for the archiving of Secret material. A copy of that report is attached below:-

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TNT [REDACTED]
MetHQ (Octob...

Recommendations for improved records management are contained in this report and these will be reviewed by RMB. All progress will be reported back through the Information Assurance & Security Board which sits monthly and is chaired by AC Martin Hewitt.

Records Management policy was updated in 2015. In light of this incident, policy and process will be reviewed and policy updates will be published in February 2016.

Conclusion

This does thankfully appear to be a rare occurrence, but is recognised by RMB as a serious breach in security and a significant failure in records management process.

Processes and archiving practices will be reviewed and staff made aware of their responsibilities when handling sensitive records. The option of more secure boxes for secret material will be investigated further.

There is currently a significant increase in archiving activity as a result of Op FileSafe. This may in turn have led to a reduction in professional standards, as a direct result of the increased volumes of material being handled by MPS officers and staff and indeed by TNT. This is however no excuse for poor standards in records management and active steps will be taken to ensure that there is not a repeat of this incident.

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