



Miriam Taha Thompson

- Age 62 at time of conviction
- Contract linguist at an overseas U.S. military facility
- Held a Top-Secret Government security clearance
- Convicted of delivering classified national defense information to aid a foreign government



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CASE STUDY

Transmitting Highly Sensitive Classified Information to Aid a Foreign Government

WHAT HAPPENED

Thompson worked as a contract linguist at an overseas U.S. military facility where she held a Top-Secret Government security clearance. Beginning in 2017, she started communicating with an unindicted co-conspirator using a video-chat feature on a secure text and voice messaging application. Over time, Thompson developed a romantic interest in her co-conspirator.

In December 2019, the United States launched a series of airstrikes in Iraq targeting Kata'ib Hezbollah, an Iranian-backed foreign terrorist organization. These airstrikes culminated in a Jan. 3, 2020, strike that resulted in the death of Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force commander Qasem Suleimani, as well as the founder of Kata'ib Hezbollah, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.

Following Suleimani's death, the unindicted co-conspirator began asking Thompson to provide information about the human assets who had helped the United States target Suleimani. After her arrest, Thompson admitted that this request came from Lebanese Hezbollah, a designated foreign terrorist organization, including an unnamed high-ranking military commander.

Thompson began accessing files concerning human intelligence sources, including true names, personal identification data, background information, and photographs of the human assets, as well as operational cables detailing information the assets provided to the U.S. Government. Thompson admitted that she believed the information she sent to a Lebanese national would go to Lebanese Hezbollah.

Thompson pled guilty and sentenced to 23 years in prison on June 23, 2021 for delivering classified national defense information to aid a foreign government.

INDICATORS

- Access Attributes – Thompson worked at an overseas U.S. military facility and held a Top-Secret Government security clearance
- Foreign Considerations – Thompson had unauthorized contact, and a romantic relationship with, an agent of a foreign intelligence entity (FIE). She also travelled to countries of concern (Lebanon) where she enabled the FIE agent
- Security and Compliance Incidents – Thompson used her access and security clearance to obtain national security information without need-to-know

IMPACT

- Thompson used her access to classified information to provide her co-conspirator with the identities of at least eight clandestine human assets; at least 10 U.S. targets; and multiple tactics, techniques, and procedures.
- “The defendant’s decision to aid a foreign terrorist organization was a betrayal that endangered the lives of the very American men and women on the battlefield who had served beside her for more than a decade,” said Acting U.S. Attorney Channing D. Phillips for the District of Columbia.
- “Thompson was entrusted with highly sensitive information, and she chose to betray her country by providing classified defense information to a foreign terrorist organization,” said Assistant Director in Charge Steven M. D’Antuono of the FBI Washington Field Office.

ADDITIONAL INFO

Thompson worked at a Special Operations Task Force facility in Erbil, Iraq since mid-December 2019. Audit logs on or about December 30, 2019, a day after U.S. airstrikes against Iranian-backed forces in Iraq, show a notable shift in Thompson's network activity on DOD systems. A review of Thompson's activities showed that she accessed SECRET-level information that she did not have a legitimate need to access. From December 30, 2019, to February 10, 2020, Thompson accessed approximately 57 files concerning eight human intelligence sources.

During a court-authorized search of Thompson's living quarters in Erbil on February 19, 2020, FBI special agents discovered a handwritten note, written in Arabic, hidden under her mattress. Thompson was the only person with access to these living quarters. A translation of the note confirmed that it contained the true names of several human assets. Specifically, the note stated that the named individuals were collecting information on behalf of the United States Government. There were also instructions to monitor the human assets' phones. The note also contained instructions to warn a named individual who was a target of the United States.

Furthermore, network activity logs show that on two consecutive days in January 2020, Thompson accessed two separate intelligence reports regarding one of the human assets identified in the note. Both reports had clear SECRET-level classification markings.

Resources for further exploration:

- [Insider Threat Indicators Job Aid](https://www.cdse.edu/Portals/124/Documents/jobaid/insider/INTJ0181-insider-threat-indicators-job-aid.pdf)
(<https://www.cdse.edu/Portals/124/Documents/jobaid/insider/INTJ0181-insider-threat-indicators-job-aid.pdf>)
- [Insider Threat Reporting Procedures Job Aid](https://www.cdse.edu/Portals/124/Documents/jobaid/insider/INTJ0174-insider-threat-reporting-proc.pdf)
(<https://www.cdse.edu/Portals/124/Documents/jobaid/insider/INTJ0174-insider-threat-reporting-proc.pdf>)
- [Understanding Espionage and National Security Crimes Job Aid](https://www.cdse.edu/Portals/124/Documents/jobaid/ci/ci-jobaidseries-understandingespionage.pdf)
(<https://www.cdse.edu/Portals/124/Documents/jobaid/ci/ci-jobaidseries-understandingespionage.pdf>)

IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING!

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

Name: _____
Title: Supervisor/Security Officer/ITP

Agency/Department: _____
Senior Official/ITP Manager