

## Former U.S. service member charged with espionage

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### American woman indicted along with four Iranian cyber criminals

A former U.S. Air Force intelligence specialist has been charged with betraying her oath to protect and defend the United States by delivering sensitive national defense information to the Iranian government, according to an indictment unsealed today by the Department of Justice.

Monica Elfriede Witt, who served in the Air Force from 1997 through 2008 and then with a cleared defense contractor until 2010, is charged alongside four Iranians who allegedly used information provided by Witt in a cyber campaign to target and compromise other U.S. security personnel.

“Once a holder of a top secret security clearance, Monica Witt actively sought opportunities to undermine the United States and support the government of Iran—a country which poses a serious threat to our national security,” said Executive Assistant Director Jay Tabb of the FBI’s National Security Branch at a press briefing Feb. 11 in Washington, D.C.

The charges came as a result of years of investigative work by the FBI’s Washington Field

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Office with assistance from the Air Force Office of Special Investigations. “This investigation exemplifies the tireless work the agents and analysts of the FBI do each and every day to bring a complex case like this to fruition,” said Nancy McNamara, assistant director in charge of the FBI’s Washington Field Office.

“[Witt] is alleged to have revealed to the Iranian government the existence of a highly classified intelligence collection program and the true identity of a U.S. intelligence officer, thereby putting the life of that individual at risk,” said Assistant Attorney General John Demers of the Department of Justice’s National Security Division.

The Texas-born Witt was recruited by Iran during conferences sponsored by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, and defected in 2013, according to U.S. officials. Although she was no longer in active government service, Witt used the contacts and knowledge gained in her positions of trust to share sensitive information with Iran and provide personal and professional details that allowed Iranian hackers to target other U.S. intelligence professionals through spear-phishing and malware attacks.

The indictment also charges Mojtaba Mosoumpour, Behzad Mesri, Hossein Parvar, and Mohamad Paryar with conspiring to commit computer intrusions targeting current and former U.S. government agents.

The four IRGC-affiliated actors allegedly used information provided by Witt to send messages through email and social media accounts that contained links and attachments that would deploy malware and establish covert access to the targeted individuals’ computers and networks.

Witt and the four charged cyber conspirators are believed to still be in Iran, but arrest warrants have been issued should they travel out of that country. The U.S. Department of Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control also announced sanctions today against several Iranian entities that played a role in the alleged espionage.

“Today should serve as a warning to those who seek out our country’s current and former national security personnel for the sensitive information they have—and to those individuals themselves,” stressed Tabb. “The FBI takes the oath we swear seriously and will pursue those

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who do not.”

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