

Ex-CIA engineer Joshua Schulte convicted over massive data leak

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New York, July 15 (RHC)-- A former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) software engineer has been convicted of leaking classified information to whistleblowing website WikiLeaks, in one of the biggest such thefts in the United States spy agency's history.

33-year-old Joshua Schulte was convicted this week by jurors in a Manhattan federal court on eight espionage charges and one obstruction charge over the so-called Vault 7 leak.

Vault 7 was a collection of malware, viruses, trojans and "zero day" exploits that, once leaked out, were available for use by foreign intelligence groups, hackers and cyber extortionists around the world.

Prosecutors said Schulte, who represented himself at the month-long trial and is now facing decades behind bars, was a resentful employee and leaked the 8,761 documents to harm the agency.

“Schulte was a CIA programmer with access to some of the country’s most valuable intelligence-gathering cyber tools used to battle terrorist organizations and other malign influences around the globe,” Damian Williams, the US attorney in Manhattan, said in a statement.

“When Schulte began to harbor resentment toward the CIA, he covertly collected those tools and provided them to WikiLeaks, making some of our most critical intelligence tools known to the public – and therefore, our adversaries.

“Today, Schulte has been convicted for one of the most brazen and damaging acts of espionage in American history,” in undermining US efforts to battle “terrorist organisations and other malign influences” around the world, Williams added.

The U.S. Department of Justice said Schulte resigned from the CIA in November 2016 and was motivated to leak the materials out of spite because he was unhappy with how management treated him. Schulte countered that he was framed and scapegoated for the leak because of his issues with management.

He was originally arrested in August 2017 on unrelated charges, and has been jailed since bail was revoked four months later. The Justice Department announced the charges related to WikiLeaks in June 2018.

Last month, Britain’s government approved the extradition of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange to the United States. He faces federal criminal charges in Virginia over his alleged role in publishing secret military documents in 2010.

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