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NEWS OCT 5 2016, 6:51 PM ET

NSA Contractor Harold Martin Busted in Alleged Theft of Secret Docs

by KEN DILANIAN, TOM WINTER and TRACY CONNOR

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A Maryland man who worked as a contractor for the NSA has been arrested for allegedly stealing classified material that was later found in his home and car, U.S. officials said Wednesday.

Navy veteran Harold Thomas Martin III, who had a top secret national security clearance, was arrested on Aug. 27 and is still in custody, according to the Justice Department. His attorneys said there is no evidence he "intended to betray his country."



Hal Martin

Martin, 51, was employed by Booz Allen Hamilton, the same firm where NSA leaker Edward Snowden was a contractor when he took a huge cache of classified documents and fled the United States in 2013. Martin was also enrolled as an information systems graduate student at the University of Maryland Baltimore County, spokeswoman Dinah Winnick confirmed.

The FBI learned about the insider breach in mid-August, when a group calling itself The Shadow Brokers

offered to sell NSA hacking tools and other secrets for \$500 million, officials told NBC News. Martin and The Shadow Brokers had some of the same materials, according to officials.

The FBI is investigating whether there is a link between Martin and The Shadow Brokers, and any connection between Martin and NSA hacking tools that were put up for sale by the Shadow Brokers, a senior official said. No link has yet been found.



The National Security Agency (NSA) headquarters in Fort Meade, Maryland. 📷 Handout / Getty Images

A federal criminal complaint unsealed Wednesday said a search of Martin's home and car turned up a trove of documents and digital files — a "large percentage" of them with highly classified information, some labeled Top Secret of Sensitive Compartmented Information.

"We take that type of conduct very seriously," Assistant Attorney General John Carlin said at the CNBC Cambridge Cyber Summit, declining to discuss any motive for the theft.

"When you are a government employee you swear an oath to protect the information, knowing the damage revealing sources and methods can do to our ability to protect ourselves against foreign threats."

The criminal complaint said that among the classified material found in Martin's home and car, six documents were obtained from sensitive intelligence and appear to date to 2014 — six months after the NSA was rocked by Snowden's leaks.

"These documents were produced through sensitive government sources, methods and capabilities, which are critical to a wide variety of national security issues," the complaint said. "The disclosure of the documents would reveal those sensitive sources, methods and capabilities."

Martin submitted to an interview after the materials were seized — at first denying he took the documents and files and later admitting it when confronted with specific documents, the complaint said.

"Martin states that he knew what he had done was wrong and that he should not have done it because he knew it was unauthorized," the complaint said.

Martin's attorneys, Jim Wyda and Deborah Boardman, said in a statement that there is no evidence their client is a traitor.

"What we do know is that Hal Martin loves his family and his country. He served his nation honorably in the U.S. Navy as a lieutenant and he has devoted his entire career to protecting his country," they said.

A neighbor of Martin said he was shocked when teams of law-enforcement officials in camouflage and wielding rifles descended on the working-class Baltimore suburb in August and hauled away garbage bags full of material.

"I thought World War III had started," the neighbor, Murray Bennett, said.

He said Martin, who is divorced, had lived next door for more than a decade. He drove an old Chevy and "was a decent sort — or seemed like it."

"We would pass out Halloween candy together," Bennett said. "Now Halloween is coming out and I guess I won't have anyone to hand out candy with."

The U.S. Navy confirmed that Martin served from 1987 to 2000, achieving the rank of lieutenant. Booz Allen did not say how long Martin had worked there but said he was fired after the arrest and that it is cooperating with authorities.

Martin was arrested for Driving Under the Influence in Maryland in 2006. He was put on probation and ordered to pay a fine.

He and his wife divorced in 2010, according to court records. She now lives out of state.

The complaint did not spell out how investigators came to suspect Martin. After the Snowden affair, the NSA installed a host of new tools designed to monitor employee behavior on its networks, but it's unclear if those played a role in this case.

At the Cyber Summit, Carlin declined to say how long investigators believe the theft had been going on.

"I don't think we can ever be satisfied with [our security measures]," he said. "We need to learn from each experience about how we can best protect [our systems]."

One former senior U.S. cybersecurity officials said he had heard talk of an urgent investigation into the theft of NSA documents.

"We'd heard for weeks that there was another insider at the NSA, a Snowden-like character," said the former official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of his ongoing security contracting work.

"I don't think anyone has any idea yet how much damage has been done. They will do a complete evaluation of what he had access to," said the former official.



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↓ NEXT STORY How Exactly Are Hurricanes Tracked?

NEWS OCT 5 2016, 8:58 PM ET

How Exactly Are Hurricanes Tracked?

by ALIYAH FRUMIN



Just where is Matthew going?

As hundreds of thousands of people in South Carolina and Florida prepare to evacuate while the deadly hurricane barrels closer to the U.S., meteorologists continue to watch the mega storm in an effort to predict what's going to happen — and how to keep everyone out of harm's way.

But hurricanes are particularly tricky to track.

"We're always waiting for the next curve ball," said Frank Giannasca, a senior forecaster for The Weather Company.

Hurricanes are tracked in several ways: Via satellite, reconnaissance aircraft and balloons that collect data including temperature, humidity and wind speed.

Those various data streams are then compiled to create computer-forecast models that attempt to predict the path and intensity of the storm.

Related: Thousands of Americans Head Inland to Escape Hurricane Matthew

But lots of the data — especially ridges (areas of high atmospheric pressure) and troughs (areas of low atmospheric pressure) — are constantly changing.

"Even the forecast of Matthew has evolved so much because new information develops as the storm moves along ... Just three days ago, there was a question on whether or not it would even reach the United States. And now we're talking about it coming very, very close to Florida and Georgia," Giannasca said.

There are plenty of other confounding variables, too. For example, a storm system on the West Coast could affect a storm on the East Coast, but you can't sample a lot of that data until the storm actually moves on shore, explained NBC News meteorologist Bill Karins.

In the case of Hurricane Matthew, the area of high pressure was stronger in the Atlantic than initially thought, which is why it's coming closer to the United States than once anticipated, he said.

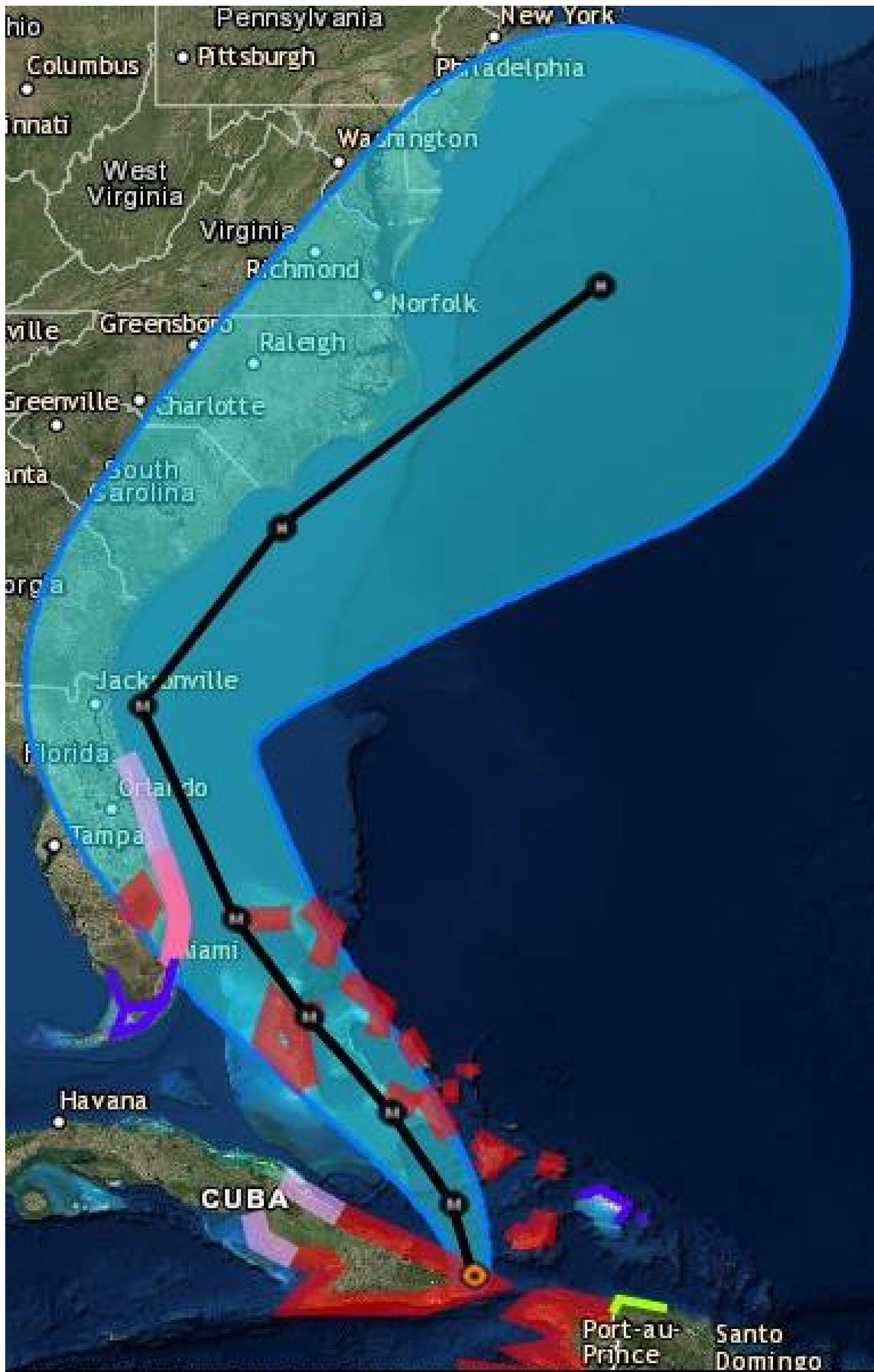
"The reason that hurricane forecasting isn't more of an exact science is because we are limited by the data that we get. We're limited by the data that's given to us by these satellites, by these drones that fly through these storms, or the hurricane hunters who fly right through the eye. There's only so many of them and the storm is so huge. All that data goes into a computer model. The computer models would be a lot better if it had a lot better data," said Karins.

Related: Hurricane Matthew: Here's What You Need in Your Survival Kit

Depending on which angle the hurricane is coming in on, its path can also be more difficult to predict. When the hurricane is perpendicular to the coast line, it's an easier forecast compared to when it's running parallel — as is the case with Matthew — because the route can change more easily.

Although it's an inexact science, Karins said hurricane predictions have come a long way since the first satellites were launched decades ago

"The science has gotten 100 times better over the last 50 years. So although we're still going to have little minute differences of opinion of what's going to happen right until landfall, [it's] fortunate that we have the data we have now. It's much better than your parents and grandparents had," he said.



A forecast map issued late Tuesday night projects Hurricane Matthew's possible course through the end of the week.  National Hurricane Center

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↓ NEXT STORY Hurricane Matthew Strengthens as Florida Governor Urges Evacuations

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