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LEAK SHOWS NSA PENETRATED MIDEAST BANKING NETWORKS

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS IN KUWAIT TARGETED FOR ESPIONAGE



Min 26°
Max 37°

PHILIPPINES DEPORTS KUWAITI IS SUSPECT

MANILA: A Kuwaiti man suspected to be a member of the Islamic State group was yesterday deported by the Philippines to face charges at home, a justice department official said. Hussein Al-Dhafiri, one of the two suspected IS members arrested in the Philippines last month, was flown out of the country to Kuwait, undersecretary Erickson Balmes said.

A statement from the Kuwaiti embassy said Dhafiri was due to be tried in his home country. "Evidence obtained by Kuwait's state security agencies also showed that he is planning to carry out terroristic attacks in the State of Kuwait," the statement said. Dhafiri was arrested along with a Syrian woman

Rahaf Zina, also named as a member of the group. Zina and Dhafiri married after her high-ranking IS commander husband was killed in Syria, said Justice Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre. He earlier said the pair had entered the country as part of plans for "a bombing operation" in the Philippines or Kuwait.

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has warned that IS members might make their way into the country by infiltrating its Muslim communities, concentrated in the south of the largely Catholic country. The Philippines has been battling with Muslim extremist groups for years in the remote southern region, some of whom have since pledged allegiance to IS. — AFP

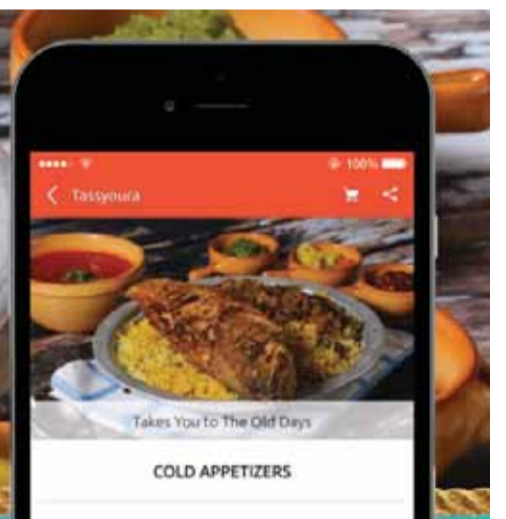
PARIS: A new set of documents purportedly lifted from the US National Security Agency suggests that American spies have burrowed deep into the Middle East's financial network, apparently compromising the Dubai office of the anti-money laundering and financial services firm EastNets. TheShadowBrokers, which started the security experts last year by releasing some of the NSA's hacking tools, has resumed pouring secrets into the public domain, this time by publishing purported details of the NSA's operations against banks across the Arab world.

In a first for TheShadowBrokers, the data includes PowerPoint slides and purported target lists, suggesting that the group has access to a broader range of data than previously known. "This is by far the most brutal dump," said Comae Technologies founder Matt Suiche, who has closely followed the group's disclosures and initially helped confirm its connection to the NSA last year. In a blog post, he said it appeared that thousands of employee accounts and machines from the EastNets' offices had been compromised and that financial institutions in

Kuwait, Bahrain and the Palestinian territories had been targeted for espionage.

Calls and messages left with EastNets' offices in Dubai, London and New York were either not picked up or not immediately returned. The authenticity of yesterday's document dump could not immediately be determined but the group's previous releases have been corroborated by material leaked by former US intelligence contractor Edward Snowden and software patches issued by major US technology firms. The NSA did not immediately return emails seeking comment.

Because EastNets provides a host of Arab banks connectivity to the banking system's electronic backbone, known as SWIFT, compromising the company would give the NSA the ability to silently track financial transactions across the Middle East, Suiche said in a phone call. He said other documents in the release suggested an even wider effort to monitor the world's transactions. "I'll bet it's not the only SWIFT service bureau that's been compromised," he said. — AP



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