Analyzer gets 18-month jail term

Sentence increased from community service by appeals court

By Bob Sullivan
MSNBC

June 6 — The Israeli teen-ager who sent U.S. government security experts on a global dragnet four years ago was sentenced Wednesday to 18 months in jail — a big increase over the 6 months community service he first received. Ehud Tenebaum's successful attacks on the Pentagon and other government computers were initially viewed as potential acts of cyberwar by a foreign government — agents scrambled for a month as part of operation "Solar Sunrise," but were red-faced when the trail led to two California teen-agers and Tenebaum.

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IT WAS LABELED "the most organized and systematic attack the Pentagon has seen to date" at the time — until computer forensics led investigators to two California teen-agers and an Israeli hacker who called himself "Analyzer."

"Analyzer" — really Tenebaum, who was 18 then — masterminded a series of high-profile break-ins of systems at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, NASA, the FBI, the U.S. Air Force, and the U.S. Department of Defense. He was nabbed by Israeli officials a month after breaking into the Pentagon computers and has faced lengthy legal proceedings ever since. Israel never considered extraditing him to the United States to face trial there.

Using a combination of plea bargaining and popular sympathy — even then-Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu complimented Tenebaum's computer skills after his arrest — Tenebaum managed to escape initially

with only 6 months of community service, one year's probation, and a fine.

"A day after [the first] verdict, he was a hero here in the biggest papers," said Israeli computer security expert Boaz Guttman. "Most of the people had arrived at the conclusion that he escaped from jail."

The Israeli government asked the appeals court to overrule the earlier ruling by Kfar Saba Magistrate's Court, saying it was too lenient. U.S. authorities were pushing for jail time, Guttman said.

And jail time Tenebaum now has. Wednesday, the Tel Aviv District Court sentenced him to 18 months in jail, one year of supervised probation and a stiff fine. Israeli computer security expert Boaz Guttman lauded the stricter sentence, saying it sent the right message to other would-be hackers.

Many of the government systems Tenebaum broke into were insecure, computer experts later revealed. Several just hadn't been updated with the latest software patches.

Tenebaum still can appeal to Israel's Supreme Court. If he doesn't, he will enter an Israeli jail on June 18