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**Spy security called into question**

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## REWARD

Academic urgently seeks information leading to the recovery of Phd vital research notes stored on Toshiba 4000 Series CDS laptop computer in black carrying case lost in London on evening 3 March 00.

This advert appeared in the Evening Standard

Tough questions need to be asked of MI5 and MI6 after the recent disappearance of two laptop computers belonging to the agencies, former defence secretary Tom King has said.

Mr King, chairman of the Parliamentary Intelligence and Security Committee, said they would be asking some "tough questions" about security at both agencies.

An urgent inquiry is under way after an MI6 officer mislaid a computer containing classified material earlier this month.

The incident was revealed days after news that an MI5 laptop with classified information on Northern Ireland was stolen at a London Underground station.

The Foreign Office has confirmed that the MI6 laptop was lost on 3 March.

The incident was reported to the Metropolitan Police and following a police investigation the computer was recovered on 16 March.

"We were assured by the police that the laptop was not compromised," a Foreign Office spokeswoman said.

She added: "It largely held training information - it was not something hugely

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**▶ The BBC's Joshua Rozenberg reports**

"The police investigation had not established any likely danger to national security"

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**▶ Tom King, chairman of the Intelligence Committee**

"I don't think sufficient thought has been given to the impact of this new technology"

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“ **I don't think sufficient thought has been given to what the impact of this new technology is**

**Tom King**

”

damaging."

Mr King said he could confirm the second incident was not in itself particularly serious.

But he said: "The fact that people working in the agencies are taking laptops around in public which may have intelligence information on it, even if it is encrypted, is a very serious matter.



"I don't think sufficient thought has been given to what the impact of this new technology is.

It is thought the laptop was mislaid near MI6 HQ

"They may be a great convenience to people working in the agencies but if you're going to carry them in public places then how they work, what safety devices there might be, what protection there might be, I don't think enough thought has been given to these areas."

Mr King said the issue of computer security goes to the very heart of the intelligence agencies.

### **'Compromise intelligence'**

"They depend on people, often very brave people, who give them information on terrorist threats or outrages, or serious crime.

"They do so in confidence that these agencies will keep this information protected and if they don't it compromises the chances of getting such good information in future."

Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, who has overall responsibility for MI6 - formally known as the Secret Intelligence Service, has been kept informed and MI6 is preparing a report on the incident for the Intelligence Committee.

Mr King has already called for a report into the previous incident involving the MI5 computer.

### **Anonymous advert**

The Sun newspaper said the MI6 officer lost the laptop in a taxi after drinking at a tapas bar near MI6's headquarters on the south bank of the Thames.

It claimed the service placed an anonymous advertisement in a newspaper offering a "substantial reward" in a bid to get the laptop back.

The Sun said the advert read: "Academic urgently seeks information leading to the recovery of PhD vital research notes stored on Toshiba 4000 Series CDS laptop computer in black carrying case lost in London on evening 3 March 00."

A Foreign Office spokeswoman said she could not discuss the circumstances of the laptop's loss, nor say whether the MI6 employee involved would face disciplinary action.

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