

# TIMES ONLINE

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February 12, 2010

## Confidential Shell database published on web

Robin Pagnamenta, Energy Editor

1 COMMENT | RECOMMEND? (5)

Royal Dutch Shell was at the centre of a major security breach last night after the names and telephone numbers of tens of thousands of the oil company's staff were circulating freely on the internet.



The details of up to 170,000 workers and contractors linked to the company, including some workers' addresses, were contained in a database of Shell's global workforce.

The database featured a letter that set out criticism of Shell's activities in Nigeria

The document was e-mailed out to human rights groups and environmental activists including Greenpeace apparently by a group of disaffected Shell staff who were pressing for internal changes within the Anglo-Dutch oil company.

Attached to the database was a lengthy cover letter, which set out criticism of Shell's activities in Nigeria and called for a series of changes in policy.

It claimed to have been signed jointly by a group of more than 100 Shell employees in the US, Holland and the UK.

Shell confirmed that the database, which is about six months old, was genuine yesterday but played down concerns about the security implications, claiming that it did not include personal addresses.

The company also rejected the claim that it had been circulated by any of its own staff.

News of the breach first emerged last week on a website, royaldutchshellplc.com, which has become a focus for repeated criticism of Shell in recent years.

Last night, a note on the website from one of its creators, John Donovan, claimed royaldutchshellplc.com had deleted its copy of the database on a voluntary basis because it belonged to Shell.

However, Mr Donovan also acknowledged that the potential security risk to Shell personnel from the open circulation of the database remained.

He blamed Shell for the security breach for what he said was a failure to safeguard information entrusted to the company.

Royaldutchshellplc.com also published e-mails allegedly written by Richard Wiseman, Shell's chief ethics and compliance officer, insisting that the website delete the database and warning that publication of any of the contents could amount to a criminal offence under the UK data protection act.

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The security breach has emerged as Shell is in the midst of a major restructuring drive led by Peter Voser, the group's new chief executive.

Since taking over last July, Mr Voser has axed more than 5,000 jobs at the company, including hundreds of senior managers.

As part of a sweeping cost-cutting effort, he has also merged several businesses and radically cut spending in other areas.

Shell's operations in Nigeria have been convulsed by a rumbling civil conflict in recent years that has brought production in some areas to a virtual standstill amid repeated kidnappings, violence and extortion.

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1 Comment (Displaying 1-1)

**Janice Gaines wrote:**

I think David Scott is right: Most individuals and organizations enjoy Security largely as a matter of luck. Anyone else here reading I.T. WARS? I had to read parts of this book as part of my employee orientation at a new job. The book talks about a whole new culture as being necessary – an eCulture – for a true understanding of security, being that most identity/data breaches are due to simple human errors. It has great chapters on security, as well as risk, content management, project management, acceptable use, various plans and policies, and so on. Just Google IT WARS – check out a couple links down and read the interview with the author David Scott. (Full title is I.T. WARS: Managing the Business-Technology Weave in the New Millennium).

February 12, 2010 5:17 PM GMT  
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