

Cyber-sleuthing firm IDs terror suspects

Business

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BY JAMES BERNSTEIN

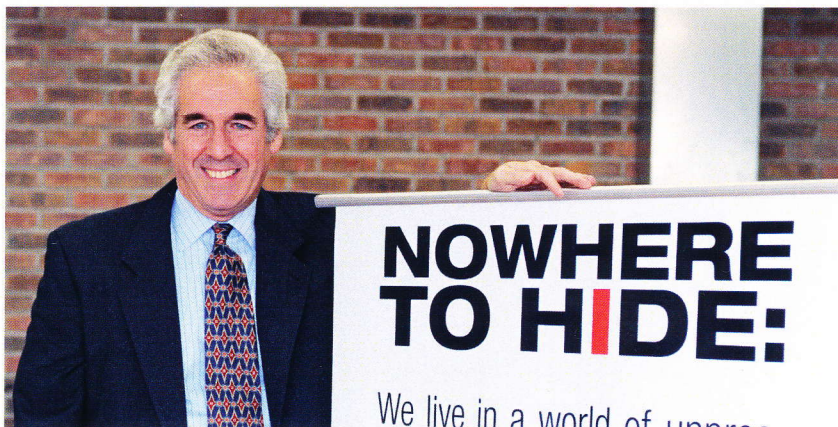
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Safe Banking Systems may be small, but in the last few months the Mineola-based database company has taken on some big, bad guys.

Last June, Safe Banking issued what it called a “public service report” that rocked the Federal Aviation Administration and the Transportation Security Administration.

The 10-year-old company informed the FAA and TSA that six men suspected or convicted of crimes that threaten national security kept their federal aviation licenses even though 9/11-related anti-terrorism laws required they be revoked. “We’re a small company,” said Safe Banking president and founder David Schiffer. “But within two hours we were able to identify those people who were high-risk individuals.” The company employs 12 people, and its sales are “under \$5 million,” Schiffer said.

The FAA ultimately suspended the licenses of the six, who included two Libyan airlines employees on the FBI’s 10 most-wanted list believed to have participated in the bombing of Pam Am Flight 103.



“Within two hours we were able to identify high-risk individuals.”

— David Schiffer, president

In a statement, the TSA said that this summer it “completed a comprehensive review of the nearly 4 million FAA certificate holders using the FBI’s Terrorist Screening Database. TSA now conducts the name matching process for these nearly 4 million records on a daily basis.”

Schiffer said Safe Banking drew all the names from public records. Safe Banking, Long Island’s largest cyber-sleuthing company, did not receive a penny for its work. It was only running a “test,” Schiffer said, when it came up with the names, using

its software.

But Safe Banking’s work was noted by national publications, and the company is now far better known, Schiffer said. Safe Banking has contracts with about 50 banks to check for fraud or funding for terrorists or drug kingpins.

Schiffer, a math and computer whiz, and his son Mark, the company’s research director, are scholarly-looking types who talk easily about algorithms.

“We chase bad guys,” Mark Schiffer said. “But we do it digitally.”

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