FBI'S HACKER-INFORMANTS

The Guardian uses an eye-popping stat from a hacker journalist—that a quarter of all hackers are FBI moles—to cement a a story about the FBI infiltrating hacker groups.

> The underground world of computer hackers has been so thoroughly infiltrated in the US by the FBI and secret service that it is now riddled with paranoia and mistrust, with an estimated one in four hackers secretly informing on their peers, a Guardian investigation has established.
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> Cyber policing units have had such success in forcing online criminals to co-operate with their investigations through the threat of long prison sentences that they have managed to create an army of informants deep inside the hacking community.
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> [snip]
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> So ubiquitous has the FBI informant network become that Eric Corley, who publishes the hacker quarterly, 2600, has estimated that 25% of hackers in the US may have been recruited by the federal authorities to be their eyes and ears. "Owing to the harsh penalties involved and the relative inexperience with the law that many hackers have, they are rather susceptible to intimidation," Corley told the Guardian.

The number **is** eye-popping. But there are two details about the story I want to note. First, it suggests that the FBI is recruiting its hacker-informants after catching them hacking. Oddly, though they consider Adrian Lamo among the hackers-moles they describe (indeed, the only one they name), they don't question whether

he just turned Bradley Manning in, or whether he was a more formal informant. Moreover, they don't note that drug abuse, not hacking, would have been the potential crime Lamo committed in the weeks preceding his turning Manning in.

Also, note what kind of recruiting the story doesn't address? DOD recruiting. Are all these hackers going straight from FBI to work in DOD's cyberwars? Or is DOD recruiting a different set of hackers?