

Police: Boca men stole trade secrets

Suspects say computer programs are theirs

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WEST PALM BEACH — Two Boca Raton computer programmers have been charged with stealing trade secrets and more than \$100,000 worth of software from a data communications firm.

Charles Jon Salvo Jr., 41, was arrested Wednesday and charged with grand theft, theft of intellectual property and destruction of intellectual property. He is free on \$10,000 bond.

An arrest warrant is outstanding for Hugh Gotrelle Spinks, 40, who faces similar charges.

The men worked for Thomas Ward and Associates, a computer systems development company at 500 E. Spanish River Blvd. in Boca Raton.

Ward said Salvo worked for his company for eight years and Spinks for three years. Both resigned May 22, he said.

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Theft suspects say programs belong to them

PROGRAMMERS/from 1B

According to an arrest report, Salvo went to Ward's office about 10 p.m. May 17 and made copies of eight different software packages. Spinks was also in the office at the time, according to the report.

The software programs were then deleted from the company's computers, according to the report.

Ward told police he has lost nearly \$250,000 worth of business and expects the losses to reach \$500,000. Ward also has filed a civil suit against Salvo and Spinks.

"We're a small company," Ward said. "They've basically put us out of business."

Attorneys for Salvo and Spinks

said their clients were independent contractors who simply took what belonged to them.

"It's their position (that) the programs are their own," said Kenneth Lipman, Salvo's attorney. "They were copyrighted programs."

Both men have college degrees and have worked in computers for years, Lipman said. Neither has a criminal record, he said.

Spinks' attorney, Joel Kenwood, said he has filed legal papers putting the city of Boca Raton on notice that he intends to sue the Police Department for false arrest.

Ward dismissed the copyright defense, saying the men filed for copyrights after they left the firm.