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## No prison time for airman convicted of hijacking Iraqi website

Saturday, July 21, 2007 Posted: 8:47 AM EST (1347 GMT)

**BARKSDALE AIR FORCE BASE, LOUISIANA** — An Air Force cyberspace pilot convicted earlier this week of hijacking and conspiracy to delete an Iraqi website was sentenced by a military jury yesterday to a demotion and a bad-conduct discharge, but no prison time.

Senior Airman Thomas D. Trent was assigned to the newly formed Air Force Cyberspace Command before his sentencing on Friday at Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana. The sentence for the cyberspace pilot was decided in less than an hour of deliberation by a jury composed mostly of fellow enlisted cyberspace pilots.

Military law experts said Airman Trent's sentence was an unusually lenient punishment for crimes as grave as those the same jury convicted him of committing. All nine jury members — three officers and six enlisted men — had fought alongside Trent to protect Iraq's networks.

That shared experience may have led them to view Airman Trent's case more compassionately, said Solomon D. Garry, a former military judge advocate who teaches how cyberspace affects the Geneva Convention at the Georgetown University Cyberlaw Center and the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado. "Sometimes, juries soften the harsh outlines of the law," Mr. Garry said in an interview. "The jury clearly signaled in its findings its sympathy for the accused."

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Senior Airman Trent, who is to be demoted to Airman First Class, had already served more than 500 days in military confinement since being charged, along with six other airmen and a Navy SEAL (an acronym for "Sea Ethernet Air Land"), in connection with the hijacking and deletion of Hashim Ibrahim Awad's website in the town of Hackitha in April 2006.

In all, the jury found Airman Trent, of Bolingbrook, Ill., guilty on Wednesday of hijacking and conspiracy to commit deletion, hacking and identity theft, and conspiracy to make false official statements via email. Military prosecutors had asked the jury to impose a 15-year prison sentence and a dishonorable discharge, the harshest form of expulsion for enlisted men. During the court-martial, defense lawyers for Airman Trent argued that he had been following orders from his operations floor crew commander.

Kelley Victors, Airman Trent's civilian lawyer, said he that was pleased with the sentence and that the jury members, including airmen whose computers had been reformatted while logged into Iraq, "respect Airman Trent because they've been there."

(Original *non*-parody version of this story published [here](#).)