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## STOLEN EMIRATI CARS IN OMAN

Rahul Das, May 06, 2009

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Geo and Logic GIS Solutions (G&L), an Emirati firm that does satellite-based tracking, reported that 50 cars stolen from the UAE were brought into the sultanate this year.

"We record one to two car thefts in the UAE every day and a large number of these cross the border and enter Oman," said Roy J Nasrallah, general manager of G&L.

G&L installs GPS/GSM devices in their clients' vehicles which allow real-time tracking anywhere in the world through Google Maps. "We are really surprised to find that a large number of vehicles is regularly smuggled into Oman," Roy told TheWeek in an e-mail interview.

Of the 50 cars, the owners of 46 have managed to get their cars back with the help of the Royal Oman Police (ROP). "The four remaining have also been tracked down and will soon be released to their owners." In 2008, the ROP alerted the public of a similar racket in the sultanate following the arrest of several individuals. Some 300 vehicles were impounded, according to the ROP. "Our Anti-Crime Department managed to arrest a group of individuals involved in a number of fraud operations and stealing of vehicles after hiring them from Oman," an ROP press release said. Investigations revealed that after hiring these cars, the perpetrators sent these vehicles to neighbouring countries, including Yemen, for sale.

This year, among the cars stolen from Sharjah was one belonging to Badree K Ibrahim, owner of rent-a-car service in Al Ain. "Two people stole his white Toyota Camry in the first week of January and drove into Oman through the Dubai-Hatta road," Roy said. From Oman, the criminals exported the car to Yemen.

"We have the locations of almost all the important garages on our tracking system and we receive an alarm when a car enters one. In the case of Badree's Camry, we found that his car had been painted a different colour and fitted with a different licence plate and sent to Yemen."

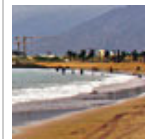
G&L's tracking system also sends out an alert if the vehicle is moving while its ignition is off. Through this, Roy and his team have been able to detect cases of stolen cars leaving through ports. G&L traced a client's Range Rover in Umm Qasr, Iraq, in this manner.

G&L has a 24-hour call centre monitoring all alerts coming in. "Our system was built entirely in-house. This helps us to continually offer clients unique services." G&L can also remotely disable a vehicle upon the client's request.

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Through a web interface, G&L's clients are able to log in and track their vehicles in real time. The client can also retrieve data on speeding and odometer information of the car. "We have cases where husbands want to track their wives. But we can only install our device if the person whose name appears on the car registration signs the documents. Many of our clients also want to keep track of their drivers and make sure that they are not speeding or going off on joy rides."

But according to Roy, G&L's services are limited to keeping its client informed. It is up to the client to find ways to retrieve the vehicle. "Ninety per cent of the cars our company monitors are rentals, and they are predominantly the ones targeted by car thieves. "I remember a case when I was on the phone with the client, telling him that his car was being stolen at that very moment. But he insisted that it was only a friend driving his car. I informed him that his car was being driven across the border illegally, but he wouldn't believe me. Our client later found his car in Yemen and was surprised to find that it had been registered to a new owner there."

According to figures released recently by the UAE's Ministry of Interior, Sharjah tops the list of car thefts in the country with 303 complaints lodged at various police stations in the emirate in the last two years. Dubai registered 222 car theft complaints, followed by Ajman 76 recording cases.

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