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BUSINESS/FINANCIAL DESK | September 25, 2001, Tuesday

Disputes on Electronic Message Encryption Take On New Urgency

By JOHN SCHWARTZ (NYT) 912 words
Late Edition - Final , Section C , Page 1 , Column 2

ABSTRACT - Attacks of Sept 11 renew debate on how strongly public-- and by extension terrorists and other criminals--should be able to encrypt their electronic messages; technology of scrambling data and messages has become crucial element of computer security for businesses and consumers; officials of law enforcement and intelligence agencies have long warned lawmakers that they were unable to break strongest encryption products, and that crimes eventually would be committed that might otherwise have been prevented; FBI has not said publicly whether hijackers who attacked World Trade Center and Pentagon even used encryption to cloak their communications; Philip R Zimmermann, creator of popular encryption programs, known as PGP, says he would be surprised if this were not case; Sen Judd Gregg says he will not make specific legislative proposal until he sees what Atty Gen John Ashcroft includes in final version of his broad anti-terrorism bill; says he wants to see legislation to order encryption companies that sell products in US to include back door that would allow government access when terrorist uses encryption (M)

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