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HARVARD, MIT

Video allegedly shows late Internet activist Aaron Swartz breaking into MIT closet

Posted by Matt Rocheleau December 5, 2013 03:48 PM

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(Wired.com / Secret Service)

By Matt Rocheleau, Boston.com Staff

A surveillance video released this week by the Secret Service allegedly shows the late Internet activist Aaron Swartz breaking into a closet at MIT where he used a laptop to download millions of academic journal articles.

The footage, published by [Wired.com](#) after the outlet obtained the clip through a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit, allegedly shows [Swartz](#), a fellow at Harvard University at the time committing the act in 2011 that led MIT police to arrest him.

Facing years in prison for federal felony computer charges from that arrest, Swartz hanged himself in January.

His death shocked and saddened many Internet activists, and led some to blame MIT and prosecutors for being too aggressive in handling his criminal case, driving Swartz to commit suicide.

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Numerous virtual- and real-world memorials, rallies and hackathons have been held in honor of Swartz, a 26-year-old whose accomplishments included helping to start the social news website Reddit.com. **Protests** have been held calling for more humane prosecution of federal computer laws.

The newly released footage was captured by an IP video camera that MIT technicians hid in the closet shortly after they had traced the illegal downloading of millions of academic articles to the closet and found a laptop wired to the campus network and hidden under a box, according to Wired.com.

Before placing the camera there, the technicians consulted with police and together decided to leave the laptop in place to not tip off the alleged perpetrator, Wired.com reported.

Matt Rocheleau can be reached at matthew.rocheleau@globe.com. Looking for more coverage of area colleges and universities? Go to our [Your Campus](#) pages.

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