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TRENDS

Home security systems: beyond the panic room



Anne Cusack, Los Angeles Times

Al Corbi, president of SAFE, Strategically Armored and Fortified Environments demonstrates some of his home's safety measures.

The rich often pay big money to protect their homes, whether from thieves, intruders or nuclear attack.

By Diane Wedner, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer
September 13, 2008

THE THIEF or thieves who recently walked away with an Encino couple's multimillion-dollar art collection, including a Marc Chagall and a Diego Rivera, shouldn't have had a prayer.

In a universe where wealthy people pay millions to protect jewelry, yachts, cars, Oscar statues and wine collections, experts said the real crime is that the criminals got away with the goods so easily.

"The moment the thieves entered the property, they should have been detected, documented and deterred," said Al Corbi, president of SAFE, Strategically Armored and Fortified Environments, a Los Angeles-based company that designs sophisticated security systems for clients worldwide.

That scenario might include an outdoor camera flash and a booming voice telling the intruders they've been photographed, typically a strong deterrent to burglary, Corbi said. If that doesn't do the trick, then a recorded voice can announce to the thieves when they enter the house or touch a painting, "This system is armed and ready to fire, you are in harm's way, leave immediately!"

"You can do that remotely from your safe bedroom in the house or from a sidewalk in Paris," Corbi said. "We do a lot of those."

Whether for the über-rich or regular folk, security experts' toolboxes are brimming with devices -- some simple, some high-voltage (literally), everything from a good \$10 window lock to a nuke-safe underground hide-out that costs millions.

"You can have a moat with alligators if you want," Chris E. McGoey, a Murrieta-based security expert, said somewhat facetiously. "I've seen celebrities have vicious, barking dogs on a loudspeaker, and I've heard recordings of guns being cocked. You can have a net drop down on home invaders."

How low-tech.

Corbi recently was commissioned to design a Bat Cave, as he calls it, to protect a car collection. The design included a waterfall in front of the garage, which parts Red

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