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Father and Son Plead Guilty to Selling Counterfeit Software Worth \$1 Million

A father and son have pleaded guilty to selling \$1 million worth of counterfeit computer software through the Internet, in violation of criminal copyright infringement laws, Assistant Attorney General Lanny A. Breuer of the Criminal Division, U.S. Attorney Neil H. MacBride for the Eastern District of Virginia and John Morton, Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement announced today. The guilty pleas are part of the Department of Justice's initiative to combat online piracy.

Robert D. Cook, 56, and his son, Todd A. Cook, 23, both of Wichita Falls, Texas, pleaded guilty late yesterday to criminal copyright infringement and conspiracy to commit criminal copyright infringement before U.S. District Court Judge T.S. Ellis III, in Alexandria, Va.

According to court documents, from July 2006 through May 2008, the Cooks operated several Web sites that sold large volumes of counterfeit software with a combined retail value of approximately \$1 million.

The defendants admitted that they used these Web sites to sell downloadable counterfeit software without authorization from the copyright owners. The defendants also admitted that they promoted their illicit scheme by purchasing advertising for their Web sites from major Internet search engines.

Both defendants face up to five years in prison, a fine of \$250,000 and three years of supervised release. Sentencing has been scheduled for June 18, 2010.

The convictions of Robert and Todd Cook are the latest in an investigation out of Wichita Falls, in which four other men have been convicted for operating Web sites engaged in the sale of pirated software. Thomas C. Rushing III, William Lance Partridge and Brian C. Rue all pleaded guilty to criminal copyright infringement in U.S. District Court in Austin, Texas, on Aug. 22, 2008. Timothy K. Dunaway pleaded guilty to criminal copyright infringement on Oct. 20, 2008, in U.S. District Court in Wichita Falls. Combined, the counterfeit software sold by these individuals had a retail value of more than \$10 million.

This case is part of the Department of Justice's ongoing initiative to combat online auction piracy.

Including the guilty pleas announced today, the Department has obtained 46 convictions involving online auction and commercial distribution of counterfeit software. The Department's initiative to combat online auction piracy is just one of several steps being undertaken to address the losses caused by intellectual property theft and hold responsible those engaged in criminal copyright infringement.