



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Distribution

December 17, 2012

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Florida Man Convicted in Wiretapping Scheme Targeting Celebrities Sentenced to 10 Years in Federal Prison for Stealing Personal Data

LOS ANGELES – A Florida man who hacked into the personal e-mail accounts of more than 50 people associated with the entertainment industry – including actors Scarlett Johansson, Mila Kunis and Renee Olstead – was sentenced this afternoon to 120 months in federal prison.

Christopher Chaney, 36, of Jacksonville, Florida, was sentenced by United States District Court Judge S. James Otero, who also ordered the defendant to pay \$66,179 in restitution.

At today's hearing, Judge Otero said Chaney's conduct demonstrated a "callous disregard to the victims" – particularly two non-celebrity victims, each of whom was stalked by Chaney for more than 10 years. Judge Otero noted that with the increase in cybercrime, it is important to realize that extreme emotional distress can be as devastating as a physical injury.

Chaney has been in custody since March, when he pleaded guilty to nine felony counts, including wiretapping and unauthorized access to protected computers.

"Illegal wiretapping gave Mr. Chaney access to every email sent to more than four dozen victims, and allowed him to view their most personal information," said United States Attorney André Birotte Jr. "Mr. Chaney is responsible for causing dozens of illegally obtained, private photographs to be posted on the Internet, where they were available for all to see. This case is a sobering reminder that cybercrime poses a very real threat to every American, and everyone should take steps to safeguard their

identities and personal information on the Internet.”

Bill Lewis, the Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI’s Los Angeles Field Office, commented: “For many victims, Mr. Chaney’s actions were tantamount to breaking and entering of their private homes by a thief in the night. Mr. Chaney methodically targeted his victims based on their celebrity without regard for the law or the impact the theft of personal and intimate details would have to their lives. This case illustrates the need for cybersecurity vigilance by computer users and, in addition, may serve as a deterrent for anyone contemplating similar intrusions.”

When he pleaded guilty, Chaney admitted that from at least November 2010 to October 2011, he hacked into the victims’ e-mail accounts by clicking on the “forgot your password?” feature, and then re-setting the victims’ passwords by correctly answering their security questions he guessed by using publicly available information he on the Internet. Once Chaney gained exclusive control of the victims’ e-mail accounts, he was able to access all of their email boxes. While in the accounts, Chaney also went through their contact lists to find addresses of potential new hacking targets.

In relation to the wiretapping charges, Chaney admitted that for most victims he changed their e-mail account settings by inserting his own email address into the forwarding feature so that he would receive, without the victims’ knowledge, a duplicate copy of all incoming e-mails. Most of the victims did not check their account settings, so even after they regained control of their e-mail accounts, Chaney’s email address remained in their account settings.

Chaney admitted that as his hacking scheme became more extensive, he began using a proxy service called “Hide My IP” because he wanted to “cover his tracks” and not be discovered by law enforcement agents. Even after his home computers were seized by law enforcement, Chaney used another computer to hack into another victim’s email account.

As a result of his hacking scheme, Chaney obtained private photographs and confidential documents, including business contracts, scripts, letters, driver’s license information and social security information. On several occasions, after hacking into victims’ accounts, Chaney sent e-mails from the hacked accounts, fraudulently posing as the victims and requesting more private photographs. Chaney e-mailed many of the

stolen photographs to others, including another hacker and two gossip websites. As a result, some of the stolen photographs were posted on the Internet.

The investigation of Chaney and his hacking activities was conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

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Release No. 12-177