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News Release

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Blaine man sentenced for hacking into neighbor's Internet system to email threats against the Vice President, among other crimes

MINNEAPOLIS – Earlier today in federal court in St. Paul, a 46-year-old Blaine man was sentenced for hacking into his neighbor's wireless Internet system and posing as the neighbor to make threats against the Vice President of the United States and to email child pornography. U.S. District Court Judge Donovan W. Frank sentenced Barry Vincent Ardolf to 216 months in prison, along with 20 years of supervised release on two counts of aggravated identity theft, one count of distribution of child pornography, one count of possession of child pornography, one count of unauthorized access to a protected computer, and one count of making threats to the President and successors to the presidency. Ardolf was indicted on June 23, 2010, and pleaded guilty on December 17, 2010.

Following today's sentencing, Donald Oswald, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Minneapolis Office, said, "This investigation highlights the importance of maintaining wireless security at home or in business. This case is unique as the defendant's goal was not financially motivated, but rather to ruin the victim's reputation and livelihood."

In his plea agreement, Ardolf admitted that in February of 2009, he hacked into his neighbor's wireless Internet connection and created multiple Yahoo.com email accounts in his neighbor's name. Then, on May 6, 2009, he used one of those accounts to email the office of the Vice President of the United States. In that email, he stated,

This is a terrorist threat! Take this seriously. I hate the way you people are spending money you don't have.... I'm assigning myself to be judge jury and executioner. Since you folks have spent what you don't have it's time to pay the ultimate price. Time for new officials after you all are put to death by us....

The email, which also was sent to the Governor and a U.S. Senator from Minnesota, went on to threaten to kill the officials one at a time, with the first being dead by June 1, 2009. Ardolf signed the email with the name of the neighbor. He admittedly sent the email using the neighbor's wireless router, his intent being to have the email traced back to the neighbor.

In addition to sending the threatening email described above, Ardolf admitted that in February of 2009, he posed as his neighbor and used the email accounts he had created to send emails of a sexual nature to three of the neighbor's co-workers. Again, the defendant sent the emails through the neighbor's wireless Internet connection, intending for them to be traced back to the neighbor. Moreover, in one of the emails, Ardolf attached an image containing child pornography. Ardolf also created a MySpace page in the neighbor's name, on which he posted the same image of child pornography.

This case was the result of an investigation by the Minnesota Cyber Crimes Task Force, which is sponsored by the FBI and the U.S. Secret Service. Investigative assistance was provided by the Anoka County Sheriff's Office and the Blaine Police Department. It was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Tim Rank and Laura M. Provinzino.

The Minnesota Cyber Crimes Task Force and the Minnesota U.S. Attorney's Office want to remind people to protect their computers from unwanted intrusions. Keep your anti-virus software and firewall up to date with software from reputable companies. Anti-virus solutions and firewalls are only of value if they are regularly updated. In addition, make sure your wireless router is properly encrypted using the strongest encryption standards possible. For more information on keeping your home Internet connection safe and secure, visit—

<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/tech/tec12.pdf>
http://www.us-cert.gov/reading_room/Wireless-Security.pdf
http://www.us-cert.gov/reading_room/home-network-security

The Justice Department vigorously investigates and prosecutes cyber crimes. It created the Task Force on Intellectual Property (<http://www.justice.gov/dag/iptaskforce/>) to aid in combating intellectual property crimes both at home and abroad. According to the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center's annual report, the FBI received 22.3 percent more cyber crime complaints in 2009 than in 2008, and the total dollar loss from all cases referred to law enforcement (\$559.7 million) was more than twice the 2008 figure (\$264.4 million).

The FBI and the Minnesota U.S. Attorney's Office want to remind people to protect themselves from cyber crime. For more information, visit

<http://www.justice.gov/criminal/cybercrime/index.html>

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