



Department of Justice

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FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2012
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**HUNGARIAN CITIZEN SENTENCED IN MARYLAND TO 30 MONTHS IN PRISON
FOR HACKING INTO MARRIOTT COMPUTERS TO EXTORT EMPLOYMENT
FROM THE COMPANY**

WASHINGTON – Attila Nemeth, 26, a Hungarian citizen, was sentenced today by U.S. District Judge J. Frederick Motz to 30 months in prison for transmitting a malicious code to Marriott International Corporation computers and threatening to reveal confidential information obtained from the company’s computers if Marriott did not offer him a job.

The prison sentence was announced by Assistant Attorney General Lanny A. Breuer of the Justice Department’s Criminal Division, U.S. Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein and Special Agent in Charge David Beach of the U.S. Secret Service, Washington Field Office.

Judge Motz also ordered Nemeth to serve three years of supervised release following his prison term. Nemeth pleaded guilty in the District of Maryland on Nov. 23, 2011.

According to court documents, on Nov. 11, 2010, Nemeth emailed Marriott personnel, advising that he had been accessing Marriott’s computers for months and had obtained proprietary information. Nemeth threatened to reveal this information if Marriott did not give him a job maintaining the company’s computers. On Nov. 13, 2010, after receiving no response from Marriott, Nemeth sent another email containing eight attachments, seven of which were confirmed as documents stored on Marriott’s computer system. These documents included financial documentation and other confidential and proprietary information. Nemeth admitted that through an infected email attachment sent to specific Marriott employees, he was able to install malicious software on Marriott’s system that gave him a “backdoor” into the system. Using the “backdoor,” Nemeth was able to access proprietary email and other files belonging to Marriott.

According to the plea agreement, on Nov. 18, 2010, Marriott created the identity of a fictitious Marriott employee for the use by the U.S. Secret Service in an undercover operation to communicate with Nemeth. Nemeth, believing he was communicating with Marriott human resources personnel, continued to call and email the undercover agent, and demanded a job with Marriott in order to prevent the public release of the Marriott documents. Nemeth emailed a copy of his Hungarian passport as identification and offered to travel to the United States.

On Jan. 17, 2011, Nemeth arrived at Washington Dulles Airport for an “employment interview.” A Secret Service agent conducted the interview by assuming the role of the Marriott employee with whom Nemeth believed he had been communicating. During the course of the interview, Nemeth admitted that he accessed Marriott’s computer systems; stole Marriott’s confidential and proprietary information; and initiated the emails to Marriott threatening to publicly release Marriott’s data unless he was given a job on his terms by Marriott. To further prove his identity as the perpetrator, Nemeth demonstrated exactly how he accessed the Marriott network, his continued ability to access the Marriott network, and the location of the stolen Marriott proprietary data on a computer server located in Hungary.

As a result of the compromise of its computer network, Marriott was compelled to engage more than 100 of its employees in a thorough search of its network to determine the scope of the compromise and to identify the data that may have been compromised. The loss to Marriott as a result of the intentional damage caused by Nemeth was approximately \$1 million in salaries, consultant expenses and other costs associated with Nemeth’s intrusion.

The case is being investigated by the U.S. Secret Service and prosecuted by Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Anthony V. Teelucksingh assigned from the Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section of the Justice Department’s Criminal Division. The Criminal Division’s Office of International Affairs provided assistance in this matter.