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Hacker Into United States Courts' Information System Pleads Guilty

United States Attorney for the District of Columbia Roscoe C. Howard, Jr., announced today that United States District Court Judge Richard Roberts accepted the guilty plea of Nicholas Mamich, 44, of Bowdoinham, Maine, to one felony count of Fraud in Connection with Computers, in violation of United States Code, Title 18, Section 1030(a)(2)(B).

Assistant U.S. Attorney Miriam Smolen informed the Court that this charge arose from Nicholas Mamich's conduct in hacking numerous times into the computer system which houses the United States Federal Courts docket and electronic filing information, including the computer system which houses the information for the Court in front of which he pleaded guilty.

The Public Access to Court Electronic Records, (PACER) is a computer system operated by the Administrative Office of the United States Courts, a government agency, which maintains Court docket information, electronically stored case related documents, case statistic reports, and other related information. PACER allows the public to access the stored information, and, with an authorized password, to print or download the information for a fee of several cents per computer page. Each District Court maintains its own PACER server which houses that district's data. PACER may be accessed from a kiosk in an individual courthouse, or off-site through the Internet. PACER has a billing program which tracks the charges an authorized PACER user accrues for downloading or printing information.

Between approximately May 2000 and November 2000, from his home in Bowdoinham, Maine, Nicholas Mamich gained unauthorized access to 65 PACER computer servers belonging to United States District Courts around the country on several hundred occasions and downloaded millions of pages of data to his personal computer. Mamich devised a program that placed hidden files on the PACER servers which bypassed the PACER billing program, so that no charges would accrue. The Administrative Office of the United States Courts estimated that it incurred expenses of at least $40,000 to discover and repair the damage caused by the defendant's hacks into the PACER servers. The system has now been configured to prevent this type of conduct.

The specific charge to which Mamich pleaded guilty focused on his conduct in hacking into the PACER server of the United States District Court of the District of Columbia over twenty times from May 2000 through October 2000, and downloading information without charge valued at least at $5,000.

As a result of his plea today, Nicholas Mamich could be sentenced up to five years imprisonment, a $250,000 fine, or both. Mr. Mamich has also agreed to pay full restitution for the damage prior to sentencing. Sentencing is scheduled for March 12, 2002.

United States Attorney Howard commended the assistance of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts, and praised the investigative work of Federal Bureau of Investigation Special Agent John T. Curran. Mr. Howard also commended Assistant U.S. Attorney Miriam Smolen who prosecuted the case.

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