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News Release

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Blaine man indicted for hacking into neighbor's wireless Internet system and posing as the neighbor to email child pornography and threats to the Vice President

A 45-year-old Blaine man has been indicted in federal court in the District of Minnesota for hacking into his neighbor's wireless Internet system and allegedly posing as the neighbor to make threats to kill the Vice President of the United States and email child pornography. The indictment, which was filed earlier today, charges Barry Vincent Ardolf with two counts of aggravated identity theft, one count of making threats to the President and successors to the presidency, one count of unauthorized access to a protected computer, one count of possession of child pornography, and one count of distribution of child pornography.

The indictment alleges that in February of 2009, Ardolf hacked into his neighbor's wireless Internet connection and created multiple Yahoo.com email accounts in that person's name. Then, on May 6, 2009, he allegedly 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 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. Ardolf allegedly signed the email with the name of the neighbor from whom he stole Internet access as well as the name of that person's wife. The indictment alleges that Ardolf sent the email using the wireless router belonging to the neighbor, intending for the email to be traced back to that person.

In addition to sending the threatening e-mail described above, the indictment alleges that in February of 2009, Ardolf posed as the identity-theft victim and used the email accounts he created in the victim's name to send sexually-themed emails to three of the victim's co-workers. Again, the defendant sent the emails through the victim's wireless Internet connection, intending for them to be traced to the victim's Internet account. In one of the emails, Ardolf attached an image containing child pornography. Ardolf also allegedly created a MySpace page in the victim's name, on which he posted the same image of child pornography.

If convicted, Ardolf faces a potential maximum penalty of 20 years in prison on the distribution of child pornography charge, ten years on the pornography possession charge, five years on both the unauthorized access to a computer and the threats to the Vice President, and a mandatory two-year minimum prison sentence on each count of aggravated identity theft. All sentences will be determined by a federal district court judge.

This case is the result of an investigation by the Minnesota Cyber Crimes Task Force, which is sponsored by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the U.S. Secret Service, with assistance from the Blaine Police Department and the Anoka County Sheriff's Office. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Tim Rank.

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

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An indictment is a determination by a grand jury that there is probable cause to believe that offenses have been committed by a defendant. A defendant, of course, is presumed innocent until he or she pleads guilty or is proven guilty at trial.