Release No. 09-030

March 17, 2009

UPLAND MAN INDICTED FOR ALLEGEDLY DAMAGING COMPUTER SYSTEMS USED TO MONITOR OFF-SHORE OIL PLATFORMS

An Upland man who worked at a company that operated off-shore oil platforms was indicted today on federal charges of damaging the company's computer systems after it declined to offer him permanent employment.

Mario Azar, 28, was named in a one-count indictment returned this afternoon by a federal grand jury in Los Angeles. The indictment charges Azar with unauthorized impairment of a protected computer, a charge that carries a maximum statutory penalty of 10 years in federal prison.

Azar was an information technology consultant under contract with the Long Beach-based Pacific Energy Resources, Ltd. (PER) until May 2008, when he left the company. Azar helped set up a computer system that PER used to communicate between its offices and its oil platforms. The computer system also served a "leak detection" function for PER.

During May and June of 2008, Azar illegally accessed the PER computer system and "caused damage by impairing the integrity and availability of data," according to the indictment, which alleges that Azar caused thousands of dollars in damage.

While PER temporarily lost use of its computer systems as result of Azar's conduct, the outage did not lead to any oil leaks or environmental harm.

Azar will be summoned to make his initial appearance in United States District Court in Los Angeles on April 6.

An indictment contains allegations that a defendant has committed a crime. Every defendant is presumed to be innocent until proven guilty in court.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Long Beach Police Department.

#####

Release No. 9-030