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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, December 17, 2010
WWW.USDOJ.GOV/USAO/MN

Blaine man stops trial to plead guilty to hacking into neighbor's Internet system to email threats against the Vice President

Two days into his federal trial in St. Paul, Barry Vincent Ardolf, age 45, of Blaine, pleaded guilty to hacking into his neighbor's wireless Internet system and posing as the neighbor to make threats to kill the Vice President of the United States. He also pleaded guilty to emailing child pornography. Specifically, Ardolf pleaded guilty to 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.

In his plea agreement, Ardolf, who was indicted on June 23, 2010, 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. Ardolf signed the email with the name of the neighbor and his wife. He admitted he sent the email using the neighbor's wireless router with the intent that the email would be 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 admittedly created a MySpace page in the neighbor's name, on which he posted the same image of child pornography.

For his crimes, Ardolf faces a potential maximum penalty of 20 years in prison on the distribution of child pornography charge, ten years on the possession of child pornography charge, five years on both the unauthorized access to a computer and the threats to the Vice President charges, and a mandatory two-year minimum prison sentence on each count of aggravated identity theft. U.S. District Court Judge Donovan W. Frank will determine his sentence at a future hearing, yet to be scheduled.

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. Investigative assistance was provided by the Anoka County Sheriff's Office and the Blaine Police Department. It is being 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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