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Former Chief Technology Office Arrested For Transmitting Threats Via The Internet

JAMES B. COMEY, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that RAYMOND BLUM, the former Chief Technology Officer or Askit.com, ("Askit"), a Manhattan-based computer consulting company, was arrested today on charges of transmitting threats via the Internet to his former employer at Askit.

According to the Complaint unsealed today in Manhattan federal court, as Chief Technology Officer, BLUM had access to all computer system passwords and information necessary to operate Askit's computer networks. In February 2002, according to the Complaint, shortly after BLUM's departure from the company, Askit began to experience computer and telephone voicemail problems: there was unusual network traffic on its computer system which caused its computer network to fail; Askit's e-mail servers were flooded with thousands of messages containing pornographic images; and Askit's voicemail system was altered so that certain customers calling the company were directed to a pornographic telephone service. At the time of this activity, BLUM and Askit were in a dispute concerning the severance terms of BLUM's employment contract with Askit, the Complaint alleges.

As described in the Complaint, following the intrusions directed against their computer and voicemail systems, Askit's Chief Executive Officer (the "CEO") and its President (the "President") began receiving threatening communications in various forms. For example, it was charged that the CEO received an e-greeting card expressing sympathy at his "recent loss and bereavement."

In addition, according to the Complaint, the President received an e-greeting card containing an image of a box which, shortly after being displayed on the President's computer screen and accompanied by a creaking sound, opened to display a voodoo doll with skeleton-like features. The doll had pins stuck through various parts of the doll's body and was wearing a name tag which identified the doll as being the President. According to the Compliant, e-greeting cards are messages sent via the Internet through e-greeting card companies from senders wishing to

customize their greeting to the recipient and the voodoo greeting sent to the President was sent through a company specializing in transmitting such messages.

In addition, according to the Complaint, in April 2002, messages were posted on the portion of Askit's web site devoted to answering customer questions containing statements such as "You are doomed!" and "die." According to the Compliant, the message "die" was posted by a person identifying himself as "raymond" at an e-mail address associated with the defendant. On April 29, 2002, according to the Complaint, Askit's President received an e-mail message from a person not known to him telling the President to "say goodbye to anyone who pretends to care about you" and this message was traced to a computer at Home Box Office, BLUM's present place of employment.

BLUM is scheduled to be presented today before United States Magistrate Judge JAMES C, FRANCIS, IV.

If convicted, BLUM faces a maximum sentence of five years in prison and a $250,000 fine.

Mr. COMEY praised the investigative efforts of the FBI's Computer Hacking and Intellectual Property Squad and said that the investigation is continuing.

BLUM lives in the Brooklyn, New York.

Assistant United States Attorney JOSEPH V. De MARCO is in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Complaint are merely accusations, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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