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U.S. Department of Justice
United States Attorney
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Chardon, Ohio Woman Sentenced for Computer Fraud via Unauthorized Access of Employer's Computer System

Emily M. Sweeney, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio, today announced that on Monday, November 26, 2001, Melissa S. Brown, age 30, of 115 Tilden Avenue, Chardon, Ohio, was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Dan A. Polster in U.S. District Court in Akron, Ohio, in connection with her recent computer crime conviction. Brown was sentenced to three years probation, with a special condition that the first 7 months of her probation be served in home confinement with electronic monitoring. Brown was also ordered to pay $15,346.71 in restitution to Christian & Timbers, the victim of her offense.

On July 6, 2001, a federal grand jury in Cleveland, Ohio, returned a one count indictment charging Brown, with computer fraud in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1030(a)(5)(A). The indictment charged that on or about April 14, 2001, Brown knowingly caused the transmission of a program, information, code or command, and as a result of such conduct, intentionally caused damage, without authorization, to a protected computer server owned and/or operated by Christian & Timbers, 25825 Science Park Drive, Beachwood, Ohio.

On September 14, 2001, Brown pleaded guilty to the one count indictment. According to Court documents filed in U.S. District Court, Brown admitted that between the hours of 4:04 a.m. and 5:09 a.m. on April 14, 2001, she remotely logged onto the computer system of her employer, Christian & Timbers, an executive recruitment firm located in Beachwood, Ohio, from a company laptop computer located at her residence in Chardon, Ohio. During the session, Brown logged onto the company's computer system using the user ID and password of a co-worker, without the knowledge or authorization of the co-worker, and transmitted certain computer codes, instructions and/or commands to change the password of the company's Chief Information Officer who was on vacation at the time, thus preventing the CIO from gaining log-on access to the company computer. As a result, the victim corporation was forced to conduct a thorough analysis of their entire computer network to see if any additional damage had been done, or if any data or information had been improperly obtained by Brown.

As a result of her actions, Brown admitted that she caused Christian & Timbers to incur losses in the amount of $15,346.71.

This case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Robert W. Kern, following an investigation by the Cleveland Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

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