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TWO DEFENDANTS INDICTED FOR HACKING INTO FRESNO STATE UNIVERSITY'S COMPUTER SYSTEM TO MAKE UNAUTHORIZED GRADE CHANGES

FRESNO- United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that on Thursday, October 25, 2007, a federal grand jury returned an indictment involving JOHN ESCALERA, 29, of Fresno and GUSTAVO RAZO, JR., 28, of Pasenda, California, with conspiracy, honest services wire fraud, unauthorized access of computer and identity theft related to a grade changing scheme perpetrated against the California State University, Fresno.

The case was the result of an extensive investigation conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Cyber Crimes Task Force and the Fresno State Police Department. The Cyber Crimes Task Force consists of members of the FBI, Fresno Police Department, Fresno County Sheriff's Department, California Department of Justice and United States Secret Service. The intrusion was discovered by Fresno State while performing an audit on their grading software.

According to Assistant U.S. Attorney Stanley A. Boone, who is prosecuting the case, ESCALERA, a student and employee of Fresno State, hacked into an unauthorized area of the university's computer system in order to acquire names and passwords of individuals who had grade changing authority. After acquiring this data and using a software program which deciphered user names and passwords, ESCALERA was able to acquire the actual user names and accompanying passwords. Armed with this information, he entered the university's computer system and made grade changes for himself and a friend, RAZO. RAZO paid ESCALERA for making the grade change.

The charged counts carry a maximum punishment of 20 years in prison and/or a $250,000 fine. However, the actual sentence will be determined at the discretion of the court after consideration of the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of variables, and any applicable statutory sentencing factors.

The charges in the indictment are only allegations, and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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