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Computer Hacker Intentionally Damages Protected Computer

Greenbelt, MD - United States Attorney Thomas M. DiBiagio and the Federal Bureau of Investigation today announced that a federal grand jury in Greenbelt has returned a four-count indictment charging offenses relating to the November 2000 attack on the computers of the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee, a pro-Israel public affairs group with offices in Washington, D.C. The indictment charged Misbah Khan of Karachi, Pakistan with hacking into AIPAC's computer server in Silver Spring, Maryland on November 1, 2000. He replaced AIPAC's World Wide Web page with a page boasting that AIPAC had been "hacked by Doctor Nuker, Founder Pakistan Hackerz Club, doctornuker@puckoff.com." The unauthorized Web page contained statements attacking Israel and links to other anti-Israel or pro-Palestinian Web sites. In addition, Khan took confidential computer credit card account information belonging to AIPAC members and posted the account information on the unauthorized Web page and on other sites, resulting in unlawful use of the credit card accounts. The four-count indictment charged Khan with knowingly causing the transmission of a computer command which intentionally caused damage to AIPAC's computers; intentionally accessing AIPAC's computer without authorization and obtaining information from that computer; knowingly and with intent to defraud possessing fifteen or more unauthorized "access devices" (credit card account numbers); and causing the use of unauthorized access devices to obtain things of value of more than $1,000. The two computer offenses are punishable by up to five years in jail; the credit card offenses are punishable by up to ten years in jail; all four offenses carry fines of up to $250,000 and terms of supervised release of up to three years. FBI Special Agent-in-Charge Lynne Hunt said that "doctornuker" was recently identified as Misbah Khan by the FBI computer crime squad with the assistance of the FBI legal office or "legat" at the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan. SAC Hunt said that the investigation demonstrates that "computer hackers often leave behind a more elaborate trail of evidence than they realize, and we will follow that trail no matter where in the world it leads." United States Attorney Thomas DiBiagio commended the FBI's investigation and noted that the U.S. Attorney's Office has prosecuted a number of computer intrusion and intellectual property crimes during the past year. Following the indictment, a warrant was issued for the arrest of the defendant. As in all criminal cases, the indictment is the grand jury's allegation that the defendant committed the crimes as charged in the indictment. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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