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COMPUTER HACKER SENTENCED TO TWO YEARS IN FEDERAL PRISON

SACRAMENTO, Calif.—United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that GREGORY KING, 21, of Fairfield, Calif., was sentenced to two years in federal prison. KING was also ordered to pay over $69,000 in restitution. Online, KING was known as Silenz, Silenz420, sZ, GregK, and Gregk707. He had pleaded guilty to two counts of transmitting code to cause damage to a protected computer on June 10, 2008.

This case is the product of an extensive investigation by the FBI, whose agents analyzed Internet logs, executed search warrants, performed forensic analysis of KING's computers, and took KING's confession.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Matthew D. Segal, who prosecuted the case, KING admitted to using a "botnet" to conduct distributed denial of service attacks (DDOS attacks) against two different business Web sites: Killanet and Castlecops. A botnet is a network of malware-infected, zombie computers (bots) that can be used to conduct DDOS attacks, send spam, and commit fraud over the Internet. Bots are also used to infect other computers and thus propagate the botnet. The owners of the infected computers do not know that their computers have been infected with "botware," but their computers can nonetheless be secretly directed by the "bot herder," the person in control of the botnet. In a DDOS attack, a bot herder directs the bots to flood a victim computer with information and thereby disable the target computer.

KING admitted to controlling about 7,000 bots and using them to DDOS attack Killanet and Castlecops. Killanet is an interactive forum where members could share advice on graphic design, web design, photography, and gaming and was DDOS attacked in 2004, 2005, and 2006. Castlecops is an Internet security community specializing in anti-phishing, malware analysis, and combatting spam and was DDOS attacked in 2007.

On October 1, 2007, FBI agents went to KING's residence to arrest him. After agents knocked on the front door, KING exited the back door, hid a laptop computer in the backyard, and then returned to answer the front door. Pursuant to a search warrant, the laptop was seized and searched. It contained, among other things, botnet software and references to KING's various Internet monikers.

U.S. Attorney McGregor W. Scott said, "Botnets are a 21st Century menace. Hackers need to know that if they engage in this kind of conduct, they risk federal prosecution, prison, and a restitution order that will be with them for a long time."

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