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U.S Sentences Computer Operator for Breaking into Ex-Employer's Database

JAMES B. COMEY, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that WASHINGTON LEUNG, a former employee in the Human Resources department at Marsh Inc., an insurance company located in Manhattan, was sentenced today in Manhattan federal court to 18 months in prison by United States District Judge RICHARD CONWAY CASEY for illegally accessing and deleting hundreds of computer records at Marsh.

Judge CASEY said he enhanced LEUNG's sentence based on his abuse of the trust that Marsh Inc. placed in him by "giving him access to passwords other employees were not privy to."

On October 31, 2001, LEUNG pled guilty to a one-count Indictment charging him with accessing a protected computer without authorization and deleting approximately 950 files relating to employee compensation.

According to a Complaint filed earlier in the case, as well as statements made at LEUNG's plea, a female employee at Marsh had complained that LEUNG was harassing her because she rebuffed his romantic advances. LEUNG was later terminated from Marsh and obtained employment at Viacom, Inc. In January 2001, LEUNG used a password belonging to another employee at Marsh to obtain unauthorized access to Marsh's computer database and deleted approximately 800 files relating to the compensation of Managing Directors at Marsh and approximately 150 files relating to compensation of other Marsh employees. LEUNG also altered the female employee's compensation record to reflect a $40,000 increase in her salary and a $100,000 bonus.

According to the Complaint, in February and March 2001, senior managers at Marsh received an e-mail attached to which was a file containing information from the deleted salary files. The e-mail appeared to have been originally sent from an e-mail account established at Hotmail.com. The user ID of that account contained the female employee's last name. The female employee denies having established that account. A forensic image of LEUNG's computer at Viacom revealed that the e-mails to the senior managers at Marsh were sent from that computer.

According to the Complaint, because of LEUNG's intrusion into Marsh's database, Marsh was required to expend thousands of dollars to, among other things, secure its system from future unauthorized access and re-enter deleted data.

Judge CASEY also ordered LEUNG to pay $91,814.68 in restitution to Marsh Inc.

Mr. COMEY praised the investigative efforts of the United States Secret Service and New York Electronic Crimes Task Force.

Assistant United States Attorney DANIEL R. MARGOLIS is in charge of the prosecution.

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