NEWS

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Former Systems Administrator Gets 30 Months in Prison for Planting "Logic Bomb" in Company Computers

(More)

Public Affairs Office **973-645-2888**
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NEWARK – A former computer systems administrator for Medco Health Solutions, Inc. was sentenced today to 30 months in federal prison for planting a "logic bomb" in Medco's computer systems that was designed, but failed, to wipe out critical data stored on more than 70 servers, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

U.S. District Judge Jose L. Linares also ordered Yung-Hsun Lin a/k/a "Andy Lin," 51, of Montville, to pay $81,200 in restitution to Medco. Lin must surrender to the federal Bureau of Prisons by Feb. 25 and is free on bail until then.

During a Sept. 19 plea hearing before Judge Linares, Lin admitted that while he was employed as a system administrator at Medco's Fair Lawn office he modified existing computer code and added additional code designed to wipe out computer servers on Medco's network. Lin admitted that he scheduled the code to "detonate" on his birthday.

Among the databases operated from the affected servers was a critical one maintained and updated regularly by Medco – a patient-specific drug interaction conflict database known as the Drug Utilization Review (DUR). Prior to dispensing medication, pharmacists routinely examined the information contained in the DUR to determine whether conflicts existed between or among an individual's prescribed drugs.

Lin pleaded guilty to one count of transmitting computer code with the intent of causing damage in excess of $5,000. He faces a maximum statutory penalty of 10 years in prison and a $250,000 fine. Judge Linares scheduled sentencing for Jan. 8.

The sentence imposed on Lin is believed to be the longest federal prison sentence for an attempt crime designed to damage a computer system.

Christie praised Medco for bringing the case to the government quickly for investigation and prosecution.

"That is the kind of cooperation we need and appreciate from private industry," said Christie. "Disgruntled or rogue employees are a real threat to corporate technology infrastructures and can cause extensive damage. The results of this prosecution send a message to systems administrators and employees; and industry should feel comfortable and confident in coming to us when just such cases arise."

In addition to the DUR database, the Medco servers targeted by the logic bomb contained applications relating to clients' clinical analyses, rebate applications, billing, and managed care processing. Further, the servers handled new prescription call-ins from doctors and coverage determination applications, as well as numerous internal Medco applications, including the corporate financials, pharmacy maintenance tracking, web and pharmacy statistics reporting, and the employee payroll input.

Lin admitted that he first created the malicious computer code in October 2003, around the time Medco was being spun off from Merck & Co., and Lin feared that layoffs may affect him.

In September 2003, e-mails were circulated among Lin and others discussing the anticipated layoffs of Medco computer system administrators. Then, on Oct. 2, 2003, Lin created the logic bomb by modifying existing computer code and inserting new code into Medco's servers. Part of the new computer code Lin programmed and inserted included a script designed to deploy the logic bomb automatically on April 23, 2004 – his birthday.

Lin kept the logic bomb in place after it failed to deploy on April 23, 2004, notwithstanding the fact that he was not laid off. Lin admitted that he then set the logic bomb to deploy on April 23, 2005.

On Jan. 1, 2005, a Medco computer systems administrator investigating a system error discovered the logic bomb embedded within other scripts on Medco's servers, disguised in such a way as to make it difficult to discover. Medco information technology security personnel subsequently neutralized the destructive code.

Christie credited the Special Agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun, with the Lin investigation.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Erez Liebermann of the U.S. Attorney's Computer Hacking and Intellectual Property Section, and Marc Ferzan, Chief of the U.S. Attorney's Commercial Crimes Unit.

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Defense Counsel: Kevin Marino, Esq., Newark