United States Attorney's Office District of Connecticut
Press Release

March 18, 2008

WEST HAVEN MAN INVOLVED IN EMAIL PHISHING AND SPAMMING SCHEME PLEADS GUILTY

Kevin J. O'Connor, United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut, today announced that DANIEL MASCIA, 24, of West Haven, pleaded guilty yesterday, March 17, before United States Magistrate Judge Donna F. Martinez in Hartford to one count of conspiracy to commit fraud in connection with access devices and one count of fraud in connection with electronic mail. The charges relate to a "phishing" and "spamming" scheme that targeted AOL subscribers.

According to documents filed with the Court and statements made in court, MASCIA and his co-defendants conspired to "harvest" email addresses of AOL subscribers from the Internet. The defendants then spammed thousands of AOL subscribers with counterfeit emails purporting, for example, to convey an electronic greeting card. If an AOL subscriber attempted to view the greeting card, the subscriber's computer would be infected with a software trojan preventing the subscriber from accessing AOL without entering information including the subscriber's name, address, Social Security account number, credit card number, bank account number, and personal identification number. The defendants used the information to produce counterfeit debit cards, which they used at ATM machines, online, and at retail outlets to obtain money, goods, and services.

In pleading guilty, MASCIA admitted that, during a two-day period in January 2006, he sent thousands of fraudulent emails from his home to AOL subscribers.

MASCIA is scheduled to be sentenced on June 4, 2008, by United States District Judge Alvin W. Thompson in Hartford. On the charge of conspiring to commit fraud in connection with access devices, MASCIA faces a maximum term of imprisonment of seven and one-half years and a fine of up to $250,000. On the charge of committing fraud in connection with electronic mail, a law enacted as part of the CAN-SPAM Act of 2003, MASCIA faces a maximum term of imprisonment of five years and a fine of up to $250,000.

"The CAN-SPAM Act of 2003 makes it unlawful to send unsolicited

commercial email messages that are deceptive, including email messages that contain false subject headings or false sender information," U.S. Attorney O'Connor stated. "The federal government will vigorously prosecute those who send such email messages as part of a scheme to defraud."

This case has been investigated by the West Haven Police Department, the United States Postal Inspection Service, the United States Secret Service, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Edward Chang.

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