U.S. Department of Justice

United States Attorney

Eastern District of Pennsylvania

615 Chestnut Street

Suite 1250
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106-4476
(215) 861-8200

For Immediate Release July 21, 2008

FORMER TELEVISION NEWS ANCHOR CHARGED WITH COMPUTER CRIME

PHILADELPHIA - Acting United States Attorney Laurie Magid today announced the filing of an Information[1] against Lawrence Mendte, a former employee of KYW-TV, charging him with a felony count of intentionally accessing a protected computer without authorization and thereby obtaining information. Joining Magid in today's announcement was FBI Special Agent-in-Charge Janice Fedarcyk.

"People expect that e-mail in a password protected, personal e-mail account is private," said Acting U.S. Attorney Laurie Magid. "If you think of it in the context of another era, it's no different that someone stealing your locked briefcase, containing confidential information from your lawyer, prying it open, and helping themselves to the contents. The mere accessing and reading of privileged information is criminal. This case, however, went well beyond just reading someone's email. The defendant here engaged in a systematic pattern of intrusion that included not a dozen incidents, not a hundred incidents, but more than five hundred separate intrusions. "

"Our Email is private, just like our telephone conversations and our mail. Our expectation of privacy for e-mail is even higher, due to the high level of security used in transmitting Email messages. That's why we have passwords, to stop and prevent others from reading our most private communications and using them against us."

According to the information, Mendte illegally gained access to the personal email accounts of former colleague Alycia Lane for more than two years. Between January 1, 2008 and May 26, 2008, he logged into Lane's personal accounts approximately 537 times, from his home computer, from a computer at his vacation home, and from a computer at his place of work. In doing so, the information alleges, Mendte accessed private communications between the victim and others, including attorney-client privileged information, relating to both civil and criminal litigation in which Lane was involved. Mendte then allegedly repeatedly shared information regarding the contents of the private e-mail communications with a newspaper reporter.

[1]An Indictment or Information is an accusation. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

INFORMATION REGARDING THE DEFENDANT

NAME	ADDRESS	AGE OR DATE OF BIRTH
Lawrence Mendte	Philadelphia, PA	51

If convicted, the defendant faces a maximum possible sentence of 5 years in prison.

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation Cyber Squad and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Michael L. Levy.

UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
EASTERN DISTRICT, PENNSYLVANIA
Suite 1250, 615 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Contact: PATTY HARTMAN
Media Contact
215-861-8525

COPIES OF NEWS MEMOS AND RELATED DOCUMENTS CAN ALSO BE FOUND AT
http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/pae