NEWS RELEASE

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NEBRASKA MAN AGREES TO PLEAD GUILTY IN ATTACK OF SCIENTOLOGY WEBSITES ORCHESTRATED BY 'ANONYMOUS'

LOS ANGELES – A Nebraska man agreed today to plead guilty to participating in an attack on Church of Scientology websites in January 2008 that shut down the group's websites.

Brian Thomas Mettenbrink, 20, of Grand Island, Nebraska, was previously indicted by a federal grand jury, but in documents filed today he agreed to plead guilty to the misdemeanor charge of unauthorized access of a protected computer and to serve a one-year prison sentence.

According to court documents, Mettenbrink participated in the attack on the Scientology websites that was orchestrated by a group that labeled itself "Anonymous." That underground group has led protests against the Church of Scientology at various locations across the country, and in January 2008 announced a new offensive against Scientology. In the court documents, Mettenbrink admits that he downloaded computer software from an "Anonymous" message board and used that software to bombard Scientology websites to the point that it impaired the integrity and availability of those websites in a variation of a distributed denial of service attack (DDOS) attack. A DDOS attack occurs where a large amount of malicious Internet traffic is directed at a website or a set of websites. The target websites are unable to handle the high volume of Internet traffic and therefore become unavailable to legitimate users trying to reach the sites.

Mettenbrink, who was scheduled to go to trial on the charges in the grand jury indictment on February 9, is expected to plead guilty in federal court in Los Angeles next week.

Previously in the investigation into the “Anonymous” computer attack, Dmitriy Guzner, of Verona, New Jersey, was sentenced last year to one year and one day in federal prison after pleading guilty to participating in the “Anonymous” attack against the Scientology websites.

The cases against Mettenbrink and Guzner are part of an ongoing investigation by the United States Secret Service Electronic Crimes Task Force in Los Angeles. The agencies involved in the investigation are the United States Secret Service, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Los Angeles Police Department and the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office Bureau of Investigation.

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