August 29, 2003

United States Department of Justice
United States Attorney
Western Distict of Washington
601 Union, Street, Suite 5100
Seattle, Washington 98101-3903
(206) 553-7970
Fax: (206) 553-2054
Contact: John Hartingh
Executive Assistant United States Attorney
(206) 553-4110

Minneapolis, Minnesota 18 year old Arrested for Developing and Releasing B Variant of Blaster Computer Worm

John McKay, United States Attorney for the Western District of Washington, Thomas B. Heffelfinger, United States Attorney for the District of Minnesota, R. Scott Crabtree, Acting Special Agent in Charge, Seattle Field Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and Wallace Shields, Special Agent in Charge, Seattle Field Division of the United States Secret Service (USSS), announced that JEFFREY LEE PARSON, age 18, of Minneapolis, Minnesota, was arrested today on a one count Complaint filed in Seattle, Washington. The Complaint charges that JEFFREY LEE PARSON intentionally caused and attempted to cause damage to a protected computer, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 1030(a)(5)(A)(i), 1030(a)(5)(B)(i), 1030(b), and 1030(c)(4)(A), and Section 2. JEFFREY LEE PARSON faces a maximum sentence of ten years in prison and a $250,000.00 fine on this charge.

The Complaint alleges that JEFFREY LEE PARSON knowingly developed and released onto the Internet the B variant of the Blaster computer worm. (This variant is referred to by a number of different names including "W32/Lovesan.worm.b".) This variant infected at least 7,000 individual Internet users' computers, turned those computers into drones that attacked or attempted to attack Microsoft and, in particular, its web site www.windowsupdate.com. As a result, JEFFREY LEE PARSON intentionally caused significant damage, without authorization, to Microsoft, and other victim computers that significantly exceeds the $5,000.00 threshold set forth in Title 18, United States Code, Section 1030(a)(5)(B)(i).

JEFFREY LEE PARSON had an initial appearance today on the complaint in the Federal District Court for the District of Minnesota. "The Blaster computer worm and its variants wreaked havoc on the Internet, and cost businesses and computer users substantial time and money. Cyber hacking is not joy riding. Hacking disrupts lives and victimizes innocent people across the nation, " said Attorney General John Ashcroft. "The Department of Justice takes these crimes very seriously, and we will devote every resource possible to tracking down those who seek to attack our technological infrastructure. I congratulate the U. S. Attorneys Offices in the Western District of Washington and Minnesota, the Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section of the Criminal Division, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of

Homeland Security and the United States Secret Service for their excellent work on this case. Today's arrest is a prime example of how federal agencies can work together to combat computer crime."

United States Attorney John McKay commended the Washington Cyber Task Force on their speedy and effective investigation. He also thanked Microsoft Corporation for its assistance to law enforcement. "Computer hackers try to hide behind the anonymity of the Internet to commit crime. However, as a result of the excellent work of the Washington Cyber Task Force and other law enforcement agencies around the country, and the timely cooperation of Microsoft Corporation, law enforcement was able to quickly identify PARSON and stop his malicious activity."

U.S. Attorney for the District of Minnesota Tom Heffelfinger commented, "This case is a good example of how effectively and quickly law enforcement and prosecutors can work together and cooperate on a national level. I especially want to commend the fine work of the FBI and Secret Service task force, the Minnesota Cyber Crime Task Force, in Minneapolis, a special squad of highly trained agents that are dedicated to investigating all varieties of computer related crimes. Their collaboration with their counterparts in Seattle demonstrates clearly the government's commitment to aggressively responding to cyber crime. I further want to commend the efforts of specially trained cyber crime prosecutors in Minneapolis and Seattle for their role in the detection and solution of this case."

Secret Service Director Ralph Basham stated, "The Secret Service's participation in this investigation - with the U.S. Attorney's Office, the FBI, and Microsoft - is about sharing information and resources in an effort to enhance our abilities to investigate high-tech crimes committed against private industry, the public and the government. On behalf of the Secret Service, I want to commend the hard work of those individuals and agencies involved in this investigation."

"Malicious code like Blaster can cause millions of dollars worth of damage and can even jeopardize human life if certain computer systems are infected," said FBI Assistant Director Jana Monroe, Cyber Division. "That is why we are spending a lot of time and effort investigating these cases. The FBI has placed investigating Cyber Crime as one of the top three priorities of the FBI behind counterterrorism and counterintelligence investigations."

United States Attorney John McKay, FBI Seattle Acting Special Agent in Charge R. Scott Crabtree, and USSS Special Agent in Charge Wallace Shields emphasized that this is an on-going investigation. "Other versions of the Blaster computer worm were released onto the Internet over the last few weeks. Law enforcement is continuing its investigation into the person or persons who were involved in that activity. We encourage anyone with information concerning this matter to contact the FBI and/or the USSS."

This case was investigated by the Washington Cyber Task Force which includes local law enforcement in the Western District of Washington and the Seattle Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Seattle Division of the United States Secret Service. The Washington Cyber Task Force received assistance from numerous other law enforcement

agencies across the United States including, in particular, the Minneapolis Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Minneapolis Division of the United States Secret Service. Assistant United States Attorneys Floyd G. Short and Annette L. Hayes are prosecuting the case.

The public is reminded that a complaint contains allegations of criminal conduct that must be proved beyond a reasonable doubt, and that a defendant is presumed innocent until found guilty at trial.

For further information, please contact John Hartingh, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, at (206) 553-4110.