March 14, 2003

U.S. Department of Justice
United States Attorney
Western District of Texas
Johnny Sutton
610 N.W. Loop 410
San Antonio, Texas 78216
Phone: (210) 384-7440
Contact: ÊDaryl Fields
Public Affairs Officer

Student Charged with Unauthorized Access to University of Texas Computer System

(AUSTIN, TEXAS) United States Attorney Johnny Sutton announced today that a criminal Complaint has been filed this morning against CHRISTOPHER ANDREW PHILLIPS, a 20-year old student at the University of Texas at Austin, charging him with unauthorized access to a protected computer and using a means of identification of another person with intent to commit a federal offense. Phillips turned himself in to the United States Secret Service office in Austin in response to the Complaint. The Complaint alleges that Phillips wrote and executed a computer program that permitted him to gain unauthorized access to a database at the University of Texas at Austin and to download tens of thousands of names and social security numbers. On March 5, 2003, Secret Service agents carried out search warrants at Phillips' residences in Austin and Houston and seized several computers. On a computer found in his Austin residence, agents recovered downloaded names and social security numbers and the computer program used to access the UT database. U.S. Attorney Johnny Sutton commended the efforts of the United States Secret Service, The University of Texas at Austin, and the Texas Attorney General's Internet Bureau for its handling of this case. Upon learning about the unauthorized computer access, the University immediately contacted law enforcement and cooperated fully in the investigation. The Secret Service, in turn, with the assistance of the Internet Bureau and UT Police Department, responded swiftly to pinpoint the source of the unauthorized accesses, obtain and execute search warrants, identify the suspect, and recover the stolen data as quickly as possible. The University subsequently moved promptly to inform the public and those whose Social Security numbers may have been included in this data theft. At this point, there is no indication that the stolen data was further disseminated or used to anyone's detriment. Nevertheless, persons who may have been directly affected by this incident should remain alert for possible misuse of their names and social security numbers, and promptly report any suspected illegal activity to the United States Secret Service. The University of Texas at Austin has set up a website in response to this incident: https://www.utexas.edu/datatheft.

A Complaint is a formal accusation of criminal conduct, not evidence. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until convicted through due process of law.