Department of Justice

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"SWATTER" PLEADS GUILTY TO CONSPIRACY

Defendant Made False 911 Calls for Fun and Profit by Using "Spoof" Cards

DALLAS — The lead defendant in a swatting conspiracy that involved more than 100 victims, up to $250,000 in losses, and disruption of services for telecommunications providers and emergency responders, pled guilty yesterday in federal court, announced U.S. Attorney Richard B. Roper of the Northern District of Texas.

Stuart Rosoff, a/k/a "Michael Knight," of Cleveland, Ohio, pled guilty to one count of conspiracy to use access devices to modify telecommunications instruments and to access protected telecommunications computers. He faces a maximum statutory sentence of five years in prison, a $250,000 fine and restitution. He has been in custody since his arrest in June when he, and three co-defendants, were indicted by a federal grand jury in Dallas. Rosoff is scheduled to be sentenced on March 6, 2007, by U.S. District Judge Jane J. Boyle.

Rosoff's co-defendants, Jason Trowbridge, a/k/a "Jason from California" and "John from California," and Angela Roberson, a/k/a "Amber" and "Lil Miss Angela," were arrested in June in Houston, Texas. Co-defendant Chad Ward, a/k/a "Dark Angel," was also arrested in June, in Syracuse, New York. On October 18, 2007, Roberson, who is presently on bond, pled guilty to her role in the conspiracy. Trowbridge and Ward, who are both in custody, have a December 17, 2007, trial setting before Judge Boyle.

"Swatting" refers to falsely reporting an emergency to a police department to cause a Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) response to a physical address, or making a false report to elicit an emergency response by other first responders, such as adult protective services, to a specific physical address. "Spoofing" refers to the modification of caller I.D. information to conceal the true identity of a caller. Calls to 911 were made with spoofed caller I.D. information to convince first responders that the emergency call was real.

According to documents filed in this case, from at least January 2004, Rosoff participated in multiple party line chat groups including the "Jackie Donut," the "Seattle Donut," and the"Boston Loach" with his three co-defendants, unindicted co-conspirators, including Guadalupe Santana Martinez, and others. Co-conspirator Guadalupe Santana Martinez, of Washington, pled guilty in April 2007 to a conspiracy charge outlined in an Information and is scheduled to be sentenced in January 2008.

They agreed that members of the conspiracy would make unauthorized access to telecommunication company information stored on protected computers to obtain personal identity information of their intended targets. They also agreed to use software/hardware configured to insert or modify telecommunication access devices and account information for telephone customers and employees, in order to obtain free telephone service or discontinue service for telephone subscribers.

Rosoff admitted that he turned on telephone service for himself and others in the name of third parties. In addition, he admitted that he accessed telecommunication provider facilities and turned off telephone services of party line chat group participants for harassment, and conducted swats on party line participants, their friends and families. During the conspiracy, Rosoff obtained personal identification information on individuals targeted for swatting from the party line chat group's conversations by using social engineering techniques on telephone company employees and others and from co-defendant Trowbridge exceeding his authorized access to commercial databases which contained files of a consumer reporting agency.

In June 2006, Rosoff, Ward, Trowbridge, Roberson, and other unindicted co-conspirators, agreed to "swat" an Alvarado, Texas, family whose daughter was a party line chat group participant. On June 12, 2006, Martinez placed a spoofed phone call to the number for non-emergency services for the Alvarado, Texas, Police Department using a voice over internet protocol phone (VoIP) and a spoof card to conceal his true identity to make it appear that the call was actually made from the family's residence. Martinez identified himself as a family member and told the dispatcher that he had shot and killed members of the family, that he was holding hostages, that he was using hallucinogenic drugs, and that he was armed with an AK47. He demanded $50,000 and transportation across the U.S. border into Mexico, and threatened to kill the remaining hostages if his demands were not met.

On October 1, 2006, Martinez called the 911 non-emergency services telephone number of the Fort Worth, Texas, Police Department and identified himself as he did on June 12, 2006, when he called the Alvarado, Texas, Police Department. He stated that he had shot and killed members of the family, that he was holding hostages, that he was using hallucinogenic drugs, and that he was armed. Martinez told the dispatcher that he would kill the remaining hostages if his demands were not met. Martinez again placed the call using a VoIP phone and a spoof card to conceal his true identity and make it appear as if the call were a true emergency call placed from the family's residence.

According to documents filed in Court, as a result of the swatting telephone calls, at least two victims received injuries. Rosoff admitted knowing that injuries were received by one victim, an infirm, elderly male who resided in New Port Richey, Florida, and that as a result of the swatting activities resulting in a SWAT response, i.e., road closings, etc., normal municipal activities were disrupted in Yonkers, New York and other locations due to the false emergency calls. The swatting activities engaged in by the conspirators involved more than 100 victims including individuals, telecommunications providers, and emergency responders resulting in losses of $120,000 - $250,000, and resulted in the disruption of the services of the telecommunications providers and emergency responders which are both part of the national infrastructure. During the conspiracy, group members were responsible for more than 60 "SWAT" calls.

U.S. Attorney Roper praised the investigative efforts of the FBI. The cases are being prosecuted by Deputy Chief Assistant U.S. Attorney Linda Groves.

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