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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Laid Off Computer Systems Administrator at Financial Firm Admits Attempting to Extort Better Severance Terms

(More)

NEWARK – A former computer systems administrator at a mutual fund management company admitted today that he attempted to extort improved severance benefits from the company by threatening to damage its computer systems and data, Acting U.S. Attorney Ralph J. Marra, Jr., announced.

Viktor Savtyrev, 29, of Old Bridge, admitted before U.S. District Judge Joseph A. Greenaway, Jr., that a day after he and 13 others were laid off from the New York company, he emailed the company to complain about his severance package. Savtyrev admitted that, in the same email to the company's general counsel and three other employees on Nov. 6, 2008, he threatened to cause extensive damage to the company computer systems through data destruction and a virus outbreak if the company did not improve his severance.

Savtyrev admitted that his demands included additional severance pay, extended medical coverage and excellent references if his former company was contacted by a prospective employer. Savtyrev admitted that he also threatened to contact editors at the Wall Street Journal, Newsweek and N.Y. Daily News to embarrass the company by publicizing the damage that would be caused by the attacks.

Savtyrev admitted that he also placed phone calls and sent subsequent emails to the company repeating his threats and demands.

The company, which has not been identified in court documents, immediately contacted authorities after receiving the threat and assisted in the investigation.

"We have prosecuted several cases of disgruntled, rogue ex-employees at financial firms and other companies," said Marra. "As in this case and others, the companies stepped up and did not bow to the threat and immediately contacted authorities, which we and the FBI continue to encourage."

Savtyrev pleaded guilty to one count of making extortionate threats to damage a protected computer, which carries a maximum statutory penalty of five years in prison and a $250,000 fine. Judge Greenaway scheduled sentencing for Aug. 24. Savtyrev remains free on a $200,000 secured bond.

According to the original criminal Complaint against Savtyrev, filed on Nov. 11, the date of his arrest, Savtyrev threatened to get his "comrades from Belarus," who were well-known computer hackers, to assist him in his attack on the company servers.

Marra credited Special Agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun in Newark, with the investigation and arrest of Savtyrev. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Seth B. Kosto and Erez Liebermann of the U.S.

Attorney's Office Commercial Crimes Unit.

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Defense counsel: Robert G. Stahl, Esq.