United States Attorney's Office District of Connecticut
Press Release

August 10, 2010 TEXAS MAN ADMITS INVOLVEMENT IN SOFTWARE PIRACY CONSPIRACY

David B. Fein, United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut, announced that MICHAEL USZAKOW, also known as "iced," 46, of Houston, Texas, pleaded guilty today before Senior United States District Judge Ellen Bree Burns in New Haven to one count of conspiracy to commit criminal copyright infringement.

According to court documents and statements made in court, USZAKOW and others participated in the "warez scene," which is an underground online community consisting of individuals and organized groups who use the Internet to engage in the large-scale, illegal distribution of copyrighted software. In the warez scene, certain participants (known as "suppliers") are able to obtain access to copyrighted software, video games, DVD movies, and MP3 music files, often before those titles are even available to the general public. Other participants, known as "crackers," then use their technical skills to circumvent or "crack" the digital copyright protections. Others, known as "couriers," then distribute the pirated software to various file storage sites ("FTP sites") on the Internet for others to access, reproduce, and further distribute. The leading warez groups competed with one another to attain the reputation as the fastest, highest quality providers of pirated materials.

In approximately December 2002, USZAKOW obtained access to warez servers known as "Nite Ranger Hideout" and "The Ether Net." Specifically, from approximately December 2002 through April 2003, USZAKOW uploaded approximately 3195 files of copyrighted works to the Night Ranger Hideout site, and downloaded approximately 7296 files of copyrighted works from the site.

Judge Burns has scheduled sentencing for January 6, 2011, at which time USZAKOW faces a maximum term of imprisonment of five years and a fine of up to $250,000.

This case was investigated by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Edward Chang of the District of Connecticut and Clement J. McGovern from the Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section of the Department of Justice.

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