U.S. Department of Justice

James T. Jacks
Acting United States Attorney
Northern District of Texas

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MEDIA INQUIRIES: KATHY COLVIN
PHONE: (214)659-8600
FAX: (214) 767-2898

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INDIVIDUAL PLEADS GUILTY IN SWATTING CONSPIRACY CASE

As Part of Plea, Defendant Matthew Weigman Admits Conspiring to Retaliate Against a Witness - Faces 13 Years in Federal Prison

DALLAS — Matthew Weigman, 18, pled guilty in federal court on Tuesday, before U.S. Magistrate Judge Paul D. Stickney, to a two-count superseding information relating to his involvement in a swatting conspiracy, announced acting U.S. Attorney James T. Jacks of the Northern District of Texas. Weigman, of Revere, Massachusetts, has been in federal custody since his arrest in Boston in May 2008 on related charges outlined in a criminal complaint. According to documents filed in the case, Matthew Weigman is blind.

Specifically, Weigman, a/k/a "Little Hacker" and "Hacker," pled guilty to one count of conspiracy to retaliate against a witness, victim or an informant, and one count of conspiracy to commit access device fraud and unauthorized access of a protected computer. While Weigman acknowledged that he fully understands that the actual sentence imposed is solely the discretion of the Court, the government and Weigman have agreed that a specific sentence of not more than 156 months (13 years) incarceration is the appropriate sentence in this case. Weigman is scheduled to be sentenced by U.S. District Judge Barbara M.G. Lynn on April 24, 2009.

The case against Weigman's two co-defendants charged in this case, Sean Paul Benton, 22, of Malden Massachusetts, and Carlton Nalley, who lived in Alexandria, Virginia, is pending.

In documents filed in Court this week, Weigman admitted that he and others, including Stuart Rosoff, Jason Trowbridge, Chad Ward, Guadalupe Martinez, and Angela Roberson (defendants named in the Northern District of Texas indictment of U.S. v. Stuart Rosoff, et al.) made unauthorized access to telecommunication company information stored on protected computers to obtain personal identifying information on their intended targets, and used software and hardware configured to insert or modify telecommunication access devices and account information for telephone customers and employees to obtain free telephone service or to discontinue service for telephone subscribers.

Beginning in June 2003 through May 2008, Weigman participated in multiple telephone party line chat groups with his co-defendant Nalley, the Rosoff defendants, and other coconspirators, and they agreed among

themselves to make swatting calls to harass targeted individuals. The purpose of the party line was to provide a social network for individuals, many of whom were located in different states, to visit and socialize. To begin a swatting call, Weigman and others would fraudulently obtain the personal identifiers of certain telecommunication employees and impersonate the customer of the targeted telephone number, impersonate the telecommunications employee capable of initiating changes to the targeted telephone number, and/or establish fraudulent telephone accounts.

Other individuals associated with Weigman pled guilty to swatting-related conduct in the Rosoff case and have been sentenced. Weigman was aware as early as December 2006 that he was a target of a federal investigation when the FBI executed a search warrant at his house. He was aware that the defendants in the Rosoff case pled guilty and were being sentenced. He was also aware that a Verizon fraud investigator, who lived and worked in New Hampshire, was testifying for the government and providing the government with records and documents.

Weigman admitted that he was angered and frustrated by this Verizon investigator's interference and subsequent reporting to FBI, and that he wanted to retaliate against him. In April and May 2008, Weigman, Nalley, Benton and others conspired to retaliate against him by making telephone calls to Verizon and providing false and misleading information in an attempt to get him fired or reprimanded. Leading up to the calls to Verizon, Weigman manufactured evidence, such as spoofed telephone calls to Nalley's phone, in an effort to provide false evidence of the Verizon investigator's misconduct.

Then, on May 18, 2008, Weigman, his brother, and Benton drove to the investigator's residence to intimidate and frighten him. Weigman had told Benton that he had already placed numerous intimidating and harassing calls to the investigator and had been monitoring his phones. They had discussed what they would do if stopped by law enforcement, including providing false names.

When Verizon identified a phone line that Weigman had obtained by fraud in April 2008 and turned that phone line off, Weigman used the identities and authorization codes of Verizon employees to have the phone reactivated. He also used his ability to gain unauthorized access to the phone system to conduct unauthorized electronic monitoring of Verizon employees' phones to harass the employee and obtain information about the status of the investigation against him. He even directed others to obtain personal identifying information of Verizon employees to harass them and used his own social engineering skills to obtain information that his coconspirators couldn't.

With reference to the second count of the superseding information, Weigman admitted that in June 2006, he and others agreed to swat Victim #1 of Alvarado, Texas. Victim #1's daughter was a party line participant who lived in Fort Worth, Texas. Weigman made harassing calls to this victim's residence using a spoof card he had obtained from Rosoff. Other members of the conspiracy made a swatting call to the victim's residence that resulted in a police response to the residence on June 12, 2006. The spoofed call made it appear to emergency services that the call was actually made from the victim's residence. The conspirator identified himself as Victim #1 and told the dispatcher that 1) he had shot and killed members of his family; 2) he was holding hostages; 3) he was using hallucinogenic drugs; and 4) he was armed with an AK47. The conspirator demanded $50,000 and transportation and threatened to kill the remaining hostages if his demands were not met. On another occasion, on October 1, 2006, the conspirator called the Fort Worth, Texas, Police Department and again identified himself as Victim #1 and stated that among other things, he had shot and killed members of his family.

From August 2006 through October 2006, Weigman made more than 50 telephone calls to the Verizon Provisioning Center located in Irving, Texas, and using unauthorized access to their computers, obtained telecommunications services including Caller ID blocking and call forwarding. He also used these Verizon computers to establish new accounts and services to use in concealing the Caller ID of his coconspirators and to

terminate services to victims. Weigman also made unauthorized access to these computers to obtain account subscriber information which was used to identify personal information for targeting new victims. Weigman bragged about these activities and while he was on the telephone party lines, he and Carlton Nalley would plan and execute their criminal conduct. Weigman, with the assistance of his coconspirators, obtained, via fraud, telephone service for himself and others valued in excess of $30,000.

Weigman, Rosoff, and others provided telephone numbers and pass phrases which were used by coconspirators to obtain unauthorized access to telecommunications service provider computers. They obtained this information by various means including “social engineering” or pretexting of telephone calls to telecommunications company employees, “war dialing,” and trafficking in pass phrases and access information with other phone “phreakers,” etc. They also used their unauthorized access to terminate services to individuals and to initiate unauthorized services for themselves and others.

During the course of the conspiracy, Weigman requested, participated in, or monitored harassing interstate communications to employers, landlords, families, and friends of multiple party line participants with the intent to damage the reputation of those participants, cause them to lose their jobs, or cause them to be evicted. He and the other coconspirators used their abilities to manipulate the phone system to listen to phone conversations without permission for both pleasure and financial gain. Carlton Nalley assisted Weigman in obtaining credit card numbers and Nalley stored and maintained them for Weigman and other coconspirators to use to purchase computers and other electronic equipment.

The case is being investigated by the FBI and prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Candy Heath.