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Man Pleads Guilty to Internet Piracy of Star Wars Film

The United States Attorney's Office for the Northern District of California announced that Jason Everett Spatafore, a/k/a Dis-man, 25, of Phoenix, Arizona, pled guilty today before U.S. Magistrate Judge Joseph C. Spero to a one count information charging criminal copyright infringement (Internet film piracy) in violation of 17 U.S.C. § 506(a)(2) and 18 U.S.C. § 2319(c)(3).

In the information filed by the U.S. Attorney's Office, Mr. Spatafore was charged with having committed criminal copyright infringement (Internet film piracy) in that he willfully infringed a copyright by reproducing and distributing by electronic means copies of parts of the film Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace.

According to the plea agreement, between November 3, 1999, and December 13, 1999, the defendant willfully infringed a copyright by reproducing and distributing by electronic means copies of parts of the film Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace. He did this by posting copies of parts of the film on various web sites so that others could download copies of the film from the Internet. Further, he encouraged others to download copies of the film from those sites. Between November 3, 1999, and December 13, 1999, other individuals in the Northern District of California downloaded copies of parts of the film from the web sites where the defendant had posted the film.

The maximum statutory penalty for the offense which the defendant pled guilty to is one year imprisonment and a fine of $100,000. However, the sentence in this case will be dictated by the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of factors, and will be imposed in the discretion of the Court. Mr. Spatafore is scheduled to be sentenced on March 23, 2001, at 10:30 a.m. by Magistrate Judge Spero in San Francisco.

This prosecution is the result of an investigation by agents of the FBI, along with the Computer Hacking and Intellectual Property (CHIP) Unit of the U.S. Attorney's Office. Ross W. Nadel is the Assistant U.S. Attorney who is prosecuting the case.

A copy of this press release and key court documents filed in the case may also be found on the U.S. Attorney's Office's website at http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/can/.

All press inquiries to the U.S. Attorney's Office should be directed to Assistant U.S. Attorney Matthew J. Jacobs at (415) 436-7181.

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