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SECRET SERVICE INVESTIGATION DISRUPTS IDENTITY THEFT RING California Man Arrested on Wire Fraud, Identity Theft Charges

(Pittsburgh, PA) – A high-tech undercover investigation led by the U.S. Secret Service has led to the indictment of a California man on wire fraud and identity theft charges. Max Ray Butler, 35, of San Francisco, California, was indicted by a federal grand jury in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania following his arrest on September 5, 2007.

The arrest and indictment are the result of an ongoing Internet-based investigation targeting individuals involved in numerous illegal activities to include the purchase, sale and exploitation of various financial instruments and personnel identification information and documents.

The indictment alleges that Butler, using the online alias “Iceman,” was associated with Internet sites known for illegal carding activity. Specifically, the indictment alleges Butler to be the co-founder and administrator of “CardersMarket,” a notorious carding website. According to the indictment, Butler sold tens of thousands of credit card numbers belonging to others through websites such as CardersMarket, a virtual “safe haven” for those involved in the theft, use and sale of credits cards and other personal information.

“Cyber crime has evolved significantly over the last several years with criminals regularly targeting the personal and financial information of ordinary citizens, as well as the confidential and proprietary information of companies engaged in e-commerce,” said U.S. Secret Service Deputy Assistant Director Michael Merritt. “The Secret Service actively continues to adapt our investigative techniques to progressively combat these emerging threats to our nation’s financial infrastructure.”

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As detailed in the indictment, Butler engaged in a scheme in which he hacked into secure computer systems that connect to the Internet, including computers at financial institutions and credit card processing centers, in order to acquire credit card account information and other personal identification information that he could sell to others. The buyers would use the information either to make fraudulent purchases or to re-sell to others to use, causing losses to credit card issuers.

“Cooperation between law enforcement has allowed us to focus our resources and respond quickly to uncover and prevent criminal activity such as this type of financial fraud,” Merritt said.

In coordination with the Secret Service’s Criminal Investigative Division, agents from the Pittsburgh Field Office, Vancouver Resident Office, Santa Ana Resident Office and San Francisco Field Office investigated this case. Additional assistance was provided by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Vancouver (Canada) Police Department, the Newport Beach Police Department and the Orange County Sheriff’s Office in California, and the Pennsylvania Attorney General’s Office. The U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Western District of Pennsylvania is prosecuting the case.

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EDITOR’S NOTE: For questions concerning this release, please contact the United States Secret Service Office of Government and Public Affairs at 202-406-5708.