U.S Department of Homeland Security

United States Secret Service

Press Release

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UNITED STATES SECRET SERVICE JOINS FEDERAL TASK FORCE TO SOLVE MAJOR NETWORK INTRUSION CASE

(Washington, DC) – In what has been described as one of the most significant network intrusion cases involving unauthorized access to personal data, the federal Grand Jury in Arkansas today indicted the former owner of Florida-based e-mail marketing company, Snipermail, on a variety of charges, including: conspiracy, unauthorized access of a protected computer, access device fraud, money laundering and obstruction of justice. Six other individuals associated with Snipermail have agreed to cooperate and have entered into plea agreements with the government.

In August 2003, executives from Acxiom Corporation, headquartered in Conway and Little Rock, Arkansas, became aware of an initial intrusion to their network by an individual in Ohio. A review of activity on the affected server revealed a second series of unauthorized downloads of data.

A federal task force comprised of special agents from the United States Secret Service and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, augmented by Assistant United States Attorneys from the Eastern District of Arkansas, determined the illegal intrusion had emanated from Snipermail, which is located in South Florida.

"With internet capabilities expanding rapidly around the globe, the reach and potential for criminal intrusion are greater than ever," said Secret Service Director W. Ralph Basham. "Cooperation and partnerships have allowed us to focus our resources and respond quickly to uncover and prevent criminal activity such as network intrusions, financial fraud and other crimes."

The enormity of this investigation required utilizing agents assigned to the Secret Service's Electronic Crimes Special Agent Program and the Miami Electronic Crimes Task Force, as well as the FBI's Regional Computer Forensics Lab, the Department of Justice's Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section and computer investigative specialists from the Internal Revenue Service. Investigators assigned to Secret Service and FBI field offices in Little Rock, Miami, West Palm Beach, and Cincinnati were actively involved in the investigation.

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"The positive outcome of this investigation is testament to the strong partnerships we have established with our counterparts at the headquarters and field offices of various organizations, from the FBI and Department of Justice to the Internal Revenue Service and U.S. Attorneys' Office in Little Rock," said K.C. Crowley, Special Agent in Charge of Secret Service's Little Rock Field Office. "Furthermore, I commend Acxiom Corporation for their cooperation and responsible approach to the situation. Acxiom's quick response in contacting federal investigators after determining there had been a network intrusion should serve as a model for others in similar circumstances."

The investigation moved rapidly against Snipermail in order to prevent the further compromise and use of the stolen personal and financial information. To date, federal investigators have not uncovered any information suggesting the stolen data was used in any other fraudulent activity, such as identity theft or credit card fraud.

Acxiom is a publicly traded company with offices located throughout the world. The company headquarters are located in Conway and Little Rock, Arkansas. Acxiom provides data integration services for use by marketing departments and lists a number of Fortune 500 companies as its clients.

The United States Secret Service was originally founded in 1865 for the purpose of suppressing the counterfeiting of U. S. currency. Over the years it has grown into one of the premier law enforcement organizations charged with investigating financial crimes. The Secret Service has taken a lead role in the developing area of cyber crime, establishing working partnerships in both the law enforcement and business communities to address such issues as protection of critical infrastructure, internet intrusions and associated fraud.

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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.