



# Department of Justice

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## **TWO DEFENDANTS PLEAD GUILTY IN INTERNET MUSIC PIRACY CRACKDOWN**

WASHINGTON – Two defendants pleaded guilty to conspiracy to unlawfully reproduce and distribute copyrighted music over the Internet, Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division and U.S. Attorney Chuck Rosenberg of the Eastern District of Virginia announced today.

Arthur Gomez, 25, of La Habra, Calif., pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Leonie M. Brinkema. His sentencing has been scheduled for July 13, 2007 at 9:00 a.m. Sergey Ribiakost, 21, of Bardonia, N.Y., pleaded guilty on April 17, 2007, before U.S. District Judge James C. Cacheris. His sentencing is scheduled for July 10, 2007, at 1:00 p.m. Both defendants pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit copyright infringement and face up to five years in prison, a fine of \$250,000, and three years of supervised release.

Gomez and Ribiakost were leading members in the illegal software, game, movie and music trade online, commonly referred to as the warez scene. The defendants were active members of the pre-release music group Apocalypse Crew (APC), one of a handful of organized online criminal groups that acted as “first-providers” of much of the pirated music available on the Internet.

As a pre-release music group, APC sought to acquire digital copies of songs and albums before their commercial release in the United States. The supply of such pre-release music was often provided by music industry insiders, such as radio DJs, employees of music magazine publishers, or workers at compact disc manufacturing plants, who frequently receive advance copies of songs prior to their commercial release. Once a group prepared a stolen work for distribution, the material is distributed in minutes to secure computer servers throughout the world. From there, within a matter of hours, the pirated works are distributed globally, filtering down to peer-to-peer and other public file-sharing networks accessible to anyone with Internet access.

Ribiakost and Gomez represent the 46th and 47th convictions resulting from Operation FastLink, an ongoing federal crackdown against the organized piracy groups responsible for most of the first stage of illegal distribution of copyrighted movies, software, games and music on the Internet. Operation FastLink has resulted, to date, in more than 120 search warrants executed in 12 countries; the confiscation of hundreds of computers and illegal online distribution hubs; and the removal of more than 50 million dollars worth of illegally copied

software, games, movies and music from illicit distribution channels. Operation FastLink is the culmination of multiple FBI undercover investigations, including an investigation into online pre-release music groups led by FBI agents from the Washington field office.

In the past five years, beginning with Operation Buccaneer in 2001, Operation Fastlink in 2004, and Operation Site Down in 2005, the Department's prosecutions of top piracy organizations have resulted in more than 100 felony convictions in the U.S. for copyright infringement and conspiracy to commit copyright infringement.

This case was prosecuted by Jay V. Prabhu, trial attorney for the Criminal Division's Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section. The Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) and its member companies assisted and cooperated with the FBI's investigation in this case.

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