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Department of Justice

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Dutch Citizen Sentenced to 12 Years in Prison for Computer Hacking Scheme that Stole and Sold Credit Card Info

Local Businesses And Customers Victimized By Hacking Scheme

A Dutch citizen who was arrested and extradited from Romania was sentenced today to 12 years in prison for a computer hacking and credit card fraud scheme that victimized people around the world, announced U.S. Attorney Jenny A. Durkan. DAVID BENJAMIN SCHROOTEN, 22, also known in the hacking world as 'Fortezza' pleaded guilty in November 2012 to Conspiracy to Commit Access Device Fraud and Bank Fraud, Access Device Fraud, Bank Fraud, Intentional Damage to a Protected Computer, and Aggravated Identity Theft. At sentencing U.S. District Judge Ricardo S. Martinez asked him, "I don't think you would ever consider walking into someone's home, pulling out a gun and robbing them... Did it ever occur to you that you were doing that to all your victims?"

"By trafficking over 100,000 credit card numbers stolen by hackers, this defendant helped create the profitable black market for stolen data," said U.S. Attorney Jenny A. Durkan. "We will target every link of the cyber crook business model. The hacker who stole the numbers was sentenced to seven years in prison, the broker who sold them online was sentenced today to 12 years in prison, and next before the court will be the leader of a criminal gang that was using these credit card numbers for fraud."

SCHROOTEN and co-conspirator Christopher A. Schroebel, 21, of Keedysville, Maryland marketed stolen credit card numbers via internet sites. Schroebel hacked into the computers of two Seattle area businesses and stole credit card information. According to the records in the case, SCHROEBEL hacked into the point of sale computer in a restaurant in the Magnolia neighborhood of Seattle, and a restaurant supply store in Shoreline, Washington. Schroebel inserted malicious code onto the victim's computers that copied the personal information of the credit card transactions at the point of sale terminals. Schroebel conspired and worked with SCHROOTEN to build "carding websites," in order to make the stolen credit card numbers available to criminals for fraud. Investigators estimate that tens of thousands of people were victimized by having their stolen credit card numbers trafficked by SCHROOTEN – with a damage figure of more than \$63 million.

Charles Tony Williamson, 33, of Torrance, California, is charged with 22 counts of various felony offenses including Conspiracy to Access Protected Computers to Further Fraud, Access Device Fraud; Bank Fraud;

and Aggravated Identity Theft for his role purchasing and using the stolen credit card numbers. Williamson is scheduled for trial this spring.

“David Benjamin Schrooten's on-line criminal activities victimized thousands of U.S. citizens, and defrauded U.S. banking institutions out of millions of dollars. Mr. Schrooten's arrest and conviction demonstrates the Secret Service's ability to pursue criminal actors beyond the borders of the United States and should serve notice to other online criminals,” said Jim Helminski, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Secret Service in Seattle. “I would like to commend the team of Seattle Electronic Crime Task Force Investigators, the many law enforcement organizations both domestic and international, and the prosecutors from the United States Attorney's Office, Western District of Washington who worked many hours to investigate, and ensure extradition back to the United States to bring David Schrooten to justice

Credit card fraud costs financial institutions \$40 billion annually. In the Western District of Washington more than 180,000 stolen credit card numbers have been identified in recent cyber cases.

The case is being investigated by the U.S. Secret Service Electronic Crimes Task Force and Seattle Police Department as part of the Task Force. The U.S. Marshals Service assisted with extraditing SCHROOTEN from Romania. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Kathryn Warma. Substantial assistance was provided by the Department of Justice Criminal Division Office of International Affairs.

Component(s):

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