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PRESS RELEASE

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St. Petersburg man pleads guilty
to hacking into government websites and to selling
stolen credit card numbers

Washington, D.C. - United States Attorney Roscoe C. Howard, Jr. announced that Benjamin Stark, 22, of 8246 Eagles Park Drive, St. Petersburg, Florida, pleaded guilty today before U.S. District Judge Rosemary M. Collyer to a two-count felony information that charged Stark with unauthorized access to a computer causing damage in connection with his hacking into government computers as a member of "deceptive duo" and access device fraud, in connection with his trafficking in stolen credit card numbers on the internet. When he is sentenced on September 24, 2004, Stark will face up to fifteen years in prison and a fine of \$250,000. Under the federal sentencing guidelines, the defendant faces a likely prison term of 24 to 30 months.

According to the government's evidence, in February 2001, Stark, acting on his own and using the nickname "The-Rev," gained unauthorized access to a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers computer network and made changes to its website. In April 2002, Stark and another devised a plan to call themselves "Deceptive Duo" while gaining unauthorized access (or "hacking") into a number of government and commercial computers located in the United States.

Operating as part of "Deceptive Duo," Stark proceeded to hack into numerous non-public databases, which contained, among other information, personal identity information such as passport and social security numbers and computer passwords. The following government agencies and private entities suffered damages from the hacking activities of the "Deceptive Duo": the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Aviation Administration and Federal Highway Administration; the Defense Logistics Agency; the Department of Defense's Health Affairs office; the Department of Energy's Sandia National Lab; the Naval Air Systems Command; the Air Force Publishing Office; Dynamic Systems Inc. and Midwest Express. The investigators traced the computer connections from the victim computers back to the residence of Stark and subsequently executed a search warrant at his residence. The damage caused by the "Deceptive Duo" totaled over \$135,000.

Between June 27, 2001, and December 27, 2001, Stark also used the internet to traffic in stolen credit card information (including customer names, credit card numbers, addresses, expiration dates, telephone numbers and email addresses). Stark advertised stolen credit card numbers using an Internet Relay Chat (IRC) "room." On December 27, 2001, Stark communicated via IRC with an undercover FBI agent located in Washington, D.C. Stark then arranged to sell stolen credit card information for 447 cards to the undercover agent in exchange for a \$250 payment.

In announcing the guilty plea, United States Attorney Howard commended the investigative efforts of Special Agents Jon Burns, Chenni Huang and Peter Vu of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Keith Bonanno of the Department of Transportation Office of Inspector General, James Olmstead of the Defense Criminal Investigative Service, Kevin Holston of the Department of Energy Office of Inspector General, Keith Tate and Michael Wong of the NASA Office of Inspector General, Albert Wong of the Naval Criminal Investigative Service and Vince Butstillo of the Air

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Force. Mr. Howard also commended the work of former Assistant United States Attorney Miriam Smolen and Assistant United States Attorney John Carlin, who prosecuted the case.

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