

Russian Citizen Pleads Guilty for Involvement in Global Botnet Conspiracy

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A Russian citizen pleaded guilty today for his participation in a criminal enterprise that installed and exploited malicious computer software (malware) on tens of thousands of computer servers throughout the world to generate millions of dollars in fraudulent payments.

Acting Assistant Attorney General Kenneth A. Blanco of the Department of Justice's Criminal Division, Acting U.S. Attorney Gregory G. Brooker of the District of Minnesota and Assistant Director Scott Smith of the FBI's Cyber Division made the announcement.

Maxim Senakh, 41, of Velikii Novgorod, Russia, pleaded guilty today to conspiracy to violate the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act and to commit wire fraud before U.S. District Judge Patrick J. Schlitz of the District of Minnesota. Sentencing is set for Aug. 3, 2017. Senakh was indicted on Jan. 13, 2015, and was subsequently arrested by Finnish authorities, who extradited him to the United States.

According to admissions made in connection with the plea agreement, the malware, which is known as Ebury, harvested log-on credentials from infected computer servers, allowing Senakh and his co-conspirators to create and operate a botnet comprising tens of thousands of infected servers throughout the world, including thousands in the United States. Senakh and his co-conspirators used the Ebury botnet to generate and redirect internet traffic in furtherance of various click-fraud and spam e-mail schemes, which fraudulently generated millions of dollars in revenue. As part of the plea, Senakh admitted that he supported the criminal enterprise by creating accounts with domain registrars which helped build the Ebury botnet infrastructure and personally profited from traffic generated by the Ebury botnet.

The FBI Minneapolis Field Office is investigating the case. Senior Counsels Aaron Cooper and Benjamin Fitzpatrick of the Criminal Division's Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section and Assistant U.S. Attorney Kevin Ueland of the District of Minnesota are prosecuting this case. The Department of Justice extends its thanks to the government of Finland, the Bundeskriminalamt (BKA), CERT-Bund and the cyber security firm ESET. The Criminal Division's Office of International Affairs also provided substantial assistance.

Source: <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/russian-citizen-pleads-guilty-involvement-global-botnet-conspiracy>