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District of Arizona

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Public Affairs
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ARIZONA MAN SENTENCED TO FEDERAL PRISON FOR COUNTERFEIT SOFTWARE CONSPIRACY

PHOENIX – Christopher Loring Walters, 31, of Laveen, Ariz., was sentenced yesterday by U.S. District Judge G. Murray Snow to 27 months in federal prison. Walters pleaded guilty on February 24, 2011, to one count of Conspiracy, one count of Mail Fraud and one count of Criminal Copyright Infringement for his role in selling counterfeit brand-name software.

"Intellectual property crimes rob legitimate companies of revenue and deny customers quality, licensed products," says Ann Birmingham Scheel, Acting U.S. Attorney for the District of Arizona. "We appreciate the diligence of the Software & Information Industry Association for bringing this case to the attention of our law enforcement partners."

"Software counterfeiters cost legitimate businesses billions in lost revenue," said FBI Special Agent in Charge, James L. Turgal, Jr. "Investigating intellectual property theft is a top priority of the FBI's Cyber Program and we will continue to work with our partners in law enforcement to combat these types of crimes."

Between November 2003 and February 2006, Walters and his co-defendant, Matthew Purse, deceived consumers by mass producing counterfeit copies of brand-name software, from companies such as Adobe, Symantec, and others, and selling them for a discounted price over the Internet while claiming to be authorized distributors. They sold the counterfeit software using various eBay merchant accounts and commercial websites such as SoftwareDiner.com. Walters often used an alias to set up merchant and bank accounts in order to conceal his involvement in the criminal activity. Purse was sentenced in January 2010 and served approximately 13 months in federal prison for his role in the conspiracy.

"Software piracy impacts consumers, hurts American businesses and damages our economy," said Keith Kupferschmid, General Counsel and Senior Vice President for Intellectual Property Policy & Enforcement at the Software & Information Industry Association (SIIA)—which launched the initial investigation into Walters' piracy schemes. "For these reasons, SIIA leads the industry's most aggressive anti-piracy campaign, identifying and shutting down sites that peddle illegal software. The Walters case is a prime example of SIIA's commitment to fighting software piracy. And as Walters found out, software piracy is a serious crime that can land you in federal prison."

The investigation in this case was conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and stemmed from a referral from the Software & Information Industry Association (SIIA). The prosecution was handled by Peter Sexton and Jennifer Levinson, Assistant U.S. Attorneys, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

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