


AMERICAN MORNING SITUATION ROOM LOU DOBBS TONIGHT PAULA ZAHN NOW LARRY KING LIVE ANDERSON COOPER 360° NANCY GRACE SCHEDULES

CNN.com Member Center: [Sign In](#) | [Register](#) International Edition 

SEARCH THE WEB CNN.COM Search powered by **YAHOO!** SEARCH

Home Page
World
U.S.
Weather
Business at CNNMoney
Sports at SI.com
Analysis at Time.com
Politics
Law
Technology
Science & Space
Health
Entertainment
Offbeat
Travel
Education
Special Reports
Video
Autos with Edmunds.com
I-Reports

Agents nab master-mind behind Internet terror plot

Emails called for "threat contest" to terrorize the United States

Monday, October 23, 2006 Posted: 8:47 AM EST (1347 GMT)
MOUNTAIN VIEW, CALIFORNIA -- A middle-aged hippie computer security expert was arrested Friday and charged with posting messages in emails and on Internet blogs that called for a widespread terror campaign against the United States. At a news conference on Friday to announce the arrest, United States attorney Christopher J. Christie called it the "Internet version of yelling 'Fire!' in a crowded theater in this post-9/11 era."

Law enforcement officials said that the message posted by the man, Bruce Schneier, founder of Counterpane Internet Security Inc. in Mountain View, California, urged his followers to submit the most "plausible, terrorist attack scenarios they can come up with. Your goal: cause terror. Make the American people notice. Inflict lasting damage on the U.S. economy. Change the political landscape, or the culture. The more grandiose the goal, the better. Assume an attacker profile on the order of 9/11: 20 to 30 unskilled people, and about \$500,000 with which to buy skills, equipment, etc."

Mr. Schneier surrendered to Federal Bureau of Investigation agents in Washington, D.C. on Friday morning after testifying before Congress on emerging technologies for football stadium security. He later appeared in shackles for his first court appearance at the Federal District Court for the District of Columbia. He was charged with masterminding a terrorist threat over the Internet.

SERVICES
E-mails
RSS
Podcasts
CNNtoGO
CNN Pipeline

SEARCH
 WEB CNN.COM

Search
powered by **YAHOO!** SEARCH

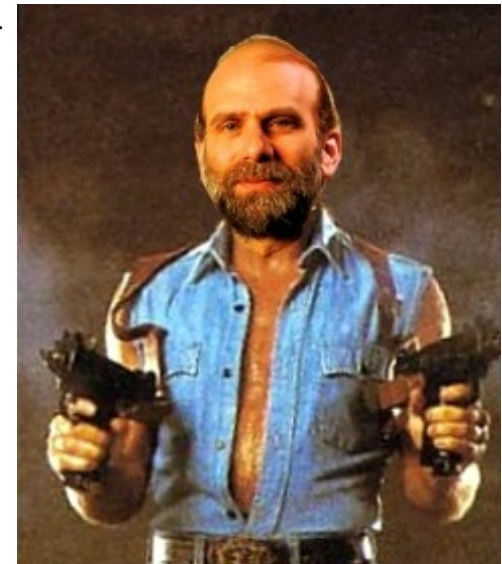
A conviction could carry a maximum sentence of five years in prison, \$250,000 fine, and the loss of his trademark hippie ponytail.

Mr. Christie said investigators had determined Mr. Schneier first posted his terrorist "threat contest" in mid-April and reposted it to numerous computer security mailing lists. "This is not an April Fool's joke," he declared. Mr. Schneier himself chose "winners" for the contest and even offered a reward for the single best terrorist plot.

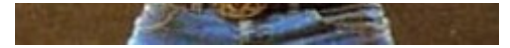
Mr. Christie did not tell reporters if Mr. Schneier planned to finance his terror operation out of his own pocket or by embezzling funds from the company he founded.

Nearly 900 disciples answered Mr. Schneier's call for a terror campaign against the United States. Mr. Christie said that Mr. Schneier later sent another email announcing he would destroy the U.S. electric power grid by crashing two hijacked UPS cargo planes into the Grand Coulee Dam. Mr. Schneier's email publicly thanked "Tom Grant" for coming up with an "imaginative" way to terrorize the United States on a relatively small budget.

Mr. Christie said Mr. Grant remains at large "but we are actively looking for the suspect."



Mr. Schneier's lawyer, Patrick Knight, would not speculate on a motive for Mr. Schneier's terror campaign, but he did say that his client's intent was not malicious. "It's the curse of the Internet," he said. "I think there is a whole class of folks who post a variety of things to get comments back, and in 2006 I don't think anyone is sure what is a private communication and what is intended for public consumption. I think in the end we will find that this was something that just spiraled out of control."



Citing Mr. Schneier's lack of a criminal record and his strong Congressional ties, Federal Magistrate Patricia J. Gorence released him into the custody of his parents on the condition that Mr. Schneier not travel outside Washington and California. Judge Gorence also forbade him to use the Internet or any computer that has access to the Internet.

The judge's conditional release evoked a tirade from the shackled hippie. "I work at a computer security company, for God's sake! My job to hack into my clients' (expletive) networks and to write a monthly newsletter for my disciples. How am I supposed to do that without a computer?" Mr. Schneier then proceeded to berate the judge. "This arraignment hearing is (expletive) 'security theater.' If you're going to arrest me, then you should arrest every mother(expletive) in computer security. You can start by arresting whichever (expletive) thinks he's in charge of cyberspace security today at the Department of Homeland Security..."

(Original *non*-parody version of this story published [here](#).)