

Megaupload programmer pleads guilty to copyright infringement

Written by bad_brain

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A programmer for defunct file storage site Megaupload has pleaded guilty to criminal copyright infringement charges and has been sentenced to a year and a day in U.S. prison.

Andrus Nomm, a 36-year-old Estonian man, pleaded guilty Friday in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia to conspiracy to commit felony copyright infringement. District Judge Liam O'Grady accepted the guilty plea and imposed the sentence.

Nomm is the first defendant to face charges in the U.S. in the Department of Justice's long-running copyright infringement case against Megaupload.

The plea is "a significant step forward in the largest criminal copyright case in U.S. history," Assistant Attorney General Leslie Caldwell said in a statement.

Nomm agreed to waive his extradition hearing in the Netherlands after he was arrested in January 2012. Prosecutors agreed to a light sentence for his guilty plea, the DOJ said in a press release.

Nomm was charged, along with six other people and two privately-held companies, by a federal grand jury on Jan. 5, 2012. A superseding indictment with additional charges was returned on Feb. 16, 2012.

The superseding indictment charged the defendants with conspiracy to commit racketeering, conspiracy to commit copyright infringement and conspiracy to commit money laundering. In addition, the defendants are charged with five counts of criminal copyright infringement and five

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counts of wire fraud.

The DOJ accused the operators of Megaupload of running websites that willfully reproduced and distributed movies and other products protected by copyright. In court papers, Nomm agreed with prosecutor estimates that the cost of Megaupload's infringement was more than US\$400 million.

At points of its operation, Megaupload claimed to account for 4 percent of total Internet traffic, with 50 million daily visitors. Nomm was a computer programmer who worked for the Mega Conspiracy from 2007 until his arrest in January 2012, he hold prosecutors.

Nomm was aware that copyright-infringing content was stored on Megaupload and related websites, including movies and television programs, he told prosecutors. Nomm downloaded copyright-infringing files from the Mega websites, the DOJ said.

An extradition hearing for four co-defendants, including Megaupload owner Kim Dotcom, is scheduled for June in Auckland, New Zealand. Two other co-defendants remain at large.