

Canadian National Sentenced in Connection with Ransomware Attacks Resulting in the Payment of Tens of Millions of Dollars in Ransoms

[justice.gov/opa/pr/canadian-national-sentenced-connection-ransomware-attacks-resulting-payment-tens-millions](https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/canadian-national-sentenced-connection-ransomware-attacks-resulting-payment-tens-millions)



Press Release

Tuesday, October 4, 2022

For Immediate Release

Office of Public Affairs

A Canadian man was sentenced to 20 years in prison and ordered to forfeit \$21,500,000 today for his role in NetWalker ransomware attacks. The Court will order restitution at a later date.

According to court documents, Sebastian Vachon-Desjardins, 35, of Gatineau, Quebec, participated in a sophisticated form of ransomware known as NetWalker. NetWalker ransomware has targeted dozens of victims all over the world, including companies, municipalities, hospitals, law enforcement, emergency services, school districts, colleges, and universities. Attacks have specifically targeted the healthcare sector during the COVID-19 pandemic, taking advantage of the global crisis to extort victims.

“The defendant identified and attacked high-value ransomware victims and profited from the chaos caused by encrypting and stealing the victims’ data,” said Assistant Attorney General Kenneth A. Polite, Jr. of the Justice Department’s Criminal Division. “Today’s sentence demonstrates that ransomware actors will face significant consequences for their crimes and exemplifies the Department’s steadfast commitment to pursuing actors who participate in ransomware schemes.”

“The defendant in this case used sophisticated technological means to exploit hundreds of victims in numerous countries at the height of an international health crisis,” said U.S. Attorney Roger B. Handberg for the Middle District of Florida. “This case is an example of the dedication and tenacious work of our law

enforcement partners to bring such criminals to justice, no matter where they reside or operate.”

“This sentencing serves as a reminder to the American public that the FBI is committed to combatting cyber threats with its world-class capabilities and enduring law enforcement partnerships,” said Special Agent in Charge David Walker of the FBI Tampa Field Office. “Our cyber task forces work vigorously to expose the cyber adversaries preying on United States citizens and bring them to justice.”

Vachon-Desjardins was extradited to the United States pursuant to the extradition treaty between the United States and Canada. Pursuant to a request submitted by U.S. authorities, Canadian law enforcement officers arrested Vachon-Desjardins in Gatineau, Quebec, on Jan. 27, 2021, and executed a search warrant at Vachon-Desjardins’s home in Gatineau. During the search, officers discovered and seized \$742,840 in Canadian currency and 719 Bitcoin, valued at approximately \$21,849,087 at the time of seizure and \$14,463,993 as of today.

The FBI Tampa Field Office investigated the case.

Trial Attorney Sonia V. Jimenez of the Justice Department’s Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Carlton C. Gammons and Suzanne Nebesky for the Middle District of Florida prosecuted the case. The Justice Department’s Office of International Affairs provided valuable assistance in securing Vachon-Desjardins’s arrest and extradition. The U.S. Marshals Service transported Vachon-Desjardins from Canada to the United States.

The investigation benefited from law enforcement cooperation by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ontario Provincial Police, Gatineau Police Service, and National Cybercrime Coordination Unit.

Updated October 4, 2022

Topic

Cybercrime

Press Release Number: 22-1066