

Spammers ordered to pay \$1 billion

Judgment thought to be largest ever

DAVENPORT, Iowa (AP) -- A federal judge has awarded an Internet service provider more than \$1 billion in what is believed to be the largest judgment ever against spammers.

Robert Kramer, whose company provides e-mail service for about 5,000 subscribers in eastern Iowa, filed suit against 300 spammers after his inbound mail servers received up to 10 million spam e-mails a day in 2000, according to court documents.

U.S. District Judge Charles R. Wolle filed default judgments Friday against three of the defendants under the Federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act and the Iowa Ongoing Criminal Conduct Act.

AMP Dollar Savings Inc. of Mesa, Arizona, was ordered to pay \$720 million and Cash Link Systems Inc. of Miami, Florida, was ordered to pay \$360 million. The third company, Florida-based TEI Marketing Group, was ordered to pay \$140,000.

"It's definitely a victory for all of us that open up our e-mail and find lewd and malicious and fraudulent e-mail in our boxes every day," Kramer said after the ruling.

Kramer's attorney, Kelly Wallace, said he is unlikely to ever collect the judgment, which was made possible by an Iowa law that allows plaintiffs to claim damages of \$10 per spam message. The judgments were then tripled under RICO.

"We hope to recover at least his costs," Wallace said.

There were no telephone listings in Arizona and Florida for the any of the three companies. An e-mail sent Saturday to Cash Link Systems went unanswered.

According to court documents, no attorneys for the defendants were present during a bench trial in November. The lawsuit continues against other named defendants.

Laura Atkins, president of SpamCon Foundation, an anti-spamming organization based in Palo Alto, California, said she believed it was the largest judgment ever in an anti-spam lawsuit.

"This is just incredible," she said. "I'm not aware of anything that's been over \$100 million."