

11 November 2008

By: Lucian Constantin, Web News Editor



Victor Faur, the Romanian found guilty of hacking into NASA and U.S. Navy systems  
Libertatea Online

## **No Prison Time for Romanian NASA and U.S Navy Hacker**

*He was sentenced to 16 months of suspended prison, and a fine of almost \$240,000*

Victor Faur from Arad, Romania, caught the international headlines in 2006, when he was indicted in the U.S. for one count of conspiracy and nine of computer intrusion, for obtaining unauthorized access to systems belonging to several government institutions. After a trial that lasted almost a year, a local Romanian court sentenced him to 16 months in prison, and requested that he pay \$240,000 in restitution to the affected parties.

According to the evidence, Mr. Faur, going by the online nickname of SirVic, was the leader of a group of hackers known as the WhiteHat Team, who used the Undernet IRC network to communicate. From November 2005 to September 2006, he personally hacked into systems belonging to the U.S. Navy, NASA and the Department of Energy, from his home in Romania, thus transforming one of the NASA computers into an online chat server.

The U.S. authorities claimed that the damages caused amounted to \$1.5 million, but Faur argued in his defense that he only hacked into those systems in order to prove that they were vulnerable, and that he did not cause any damage to them. According to him, he only targeted those servers because their group held regular contests to determine who was more skilled, and could hack into the most secure systems. In addition, he said that the accounts used to access the NASA servers had been provided to him by another Romanian hacker from Constanta, whom he only knew online.

The hacker could not be extradited because the agreement signed between Romania and the U.S. dated back to 1921, and did not include the new IT-related offenses. As a result, the U.S. authorities accepted him to be judged in Romania. According to Romanian law, if he had been found guilty on all accounts, Faur would have risked a maximum sentence of 12 years in prison, compared to the 54 years of prison time he might have received if judged in the U.S.

Even so, one of the hacker's defense attorneys, Mircea Borza, said that they would appeal to a higher court because "we did not expect this sentence." He claims that Faur was only guilty of unauthorized access to the systems, which he also admitted, but not of deleting, intercepting or altering any data. "We still believe that our defense was strong and proved that Victor Faur did not commit those offenses. [...] We also think that the sum of money which is to be paid is very high," the lawyer told a local paper.

&nbsp;

The case is similar to that of the British hacker [Gary McKinnon](#), who was arrested in 2002 for illegally obtaining access to secure U.S. military systems, in what authorities called the "biggest military hack of all time." The difference between the two cases is that the U.K. and the U.S. have a more recently-signed agreement, which facilitated McKinnon's extradition.