

## Oregon man sentenced in celebrity hacking case

A man who admitted hacking hundreds of email accounts and stealing explicit photos from several unidentified celebrities was sentenced Thursday to six months in federal prison.

US District Judge John A. Kronstadt sentenced Andrew Helton of Astoria, Oregon, to the prison term and two years of supervised release on Thursday. Helton pleaded guilty in March to stealing 161 nude or explicit photos from 13 people, including unidentified celebrities. Authorities have said they do not believe any of the images he stole were publicly released. His arrest in 2013 preceded the leaking of hundreds of nude images of celebrities, including Oscar-winning actress Jennifer Lawrence, model Kate Upton and others.

"For more than two years, defendant Andrew Helton targeted, baited, and hooked unsuspecting victims with his phishing e-mails," Assistant United States Attorney Stephanie S. Christensen wrote in a filing urging Kronstadt to sentence Helton to at least a year in prison. "He targeted strangers, acquaintances, and celebrities alike. He trolled through their private e-mail accounts, accessing the most private of communications. He systematically pilfered nude and intimate images of his victims and stored them in his own computer for personal use."

His attorney contended Helton should not receive a prison sentence because the phishing technique Helton used was not technologically sophisticated. Helton said in lengthy remarks in court that his arrest forced him to confront his mental health issues and change his life. "For the last ... five years or so, I've been a dead man walking, so to speak," Helton said at the outset of lengthy comments about how his arrest changed his life.

"Mental illness took over my life and surrounded everything," Helton said. Court filings noted he was diagnosed with bipolar disorder after his arrest in 2013 and has been receiving treatment ever since.

He said for the first time in his life, he can envision a future and wants to help people. He told Kronstadt he has a book coming out of short stories that he hopes will help people who have to undergo certain surgical procedures.

"I have a better life now than I could have ever imagined," Helton said in court. Kronstadt said Helton was clearly well-educated and had "a substantial amount of talent." Helton nodded when the judge told him that the case involved "very serious invasions of privacy," but Kronstadt said he hoped the sentence would allow Helton to move forward.

"I regard this as part of a new beginning," Kronstadt said. Prosecutors say Helton's "phishing" scheme involved sending victims emails they thought were from Apple or Google. The messages asked victims to verify their email accounts by clicking on a link that took them to a phony website, where Helton collected their usernames and passwords. — AP

## 3 subway stations to host free underground Mozart concerts

New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority is celebrating Mozart with special performances at three subway stations.

Friday's performances will kick off Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts' annual Mostly Mozart Festival. The free underground Mozart concerts will take place from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Manhattan at Fulton Center, Times Square and 59th Street-Columbus Circle.

The performances at Fulton Center will be available on Facebook Live via Lincoln Center's Facebook page. The Mostly Mozart Festival is a series of concerts at Lincoln Center and other New York City venues. The festival is marking its 50th anniversary. — AP

## Swiss seize Monet, van Gogh works amid US probe of fund 1MDB

Swiss authorities have seized three paintings by Claude Monet and Vincent van Gogh following a US request as part of a probe into the scandal surrounding the Malaysian wealth fund 1MDB. A Federal Office of Justice spokesman said Friday that van Gogh's "La Maison de Vincent a Arles" and "Saint-Georges Majeur" and Monet's "Nymphéas avec Reflets de Hautes Herbes" were confiscated on Thursday. He declined to specify the location of the confiscations or give his name because the investigation was ongoing.

Justice officials declined to estimate the value of the works, but Christie's Web site says "La Maison de Vincent a Arles" sold for nearly \$5.5 million at a New York auction in November 2013. The US on Wednesday announced moves to recover over \$1 billion that officials say was stolen from 1MDB by people close to Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak. US federal documents say the diverted funds paid for luxury US properties, a \$35 million jet, artworks, and helped finance Hollywood film, "The Wolf of Wall Street." — AP



SAN DIEGO: A general view of atmosphere during Comic-Con International yesterday. — AFP

## Comic-Con builds buzz for 'Walking Dead,' 'Thrones'

Ratings juggernaut "The Walking Dead" revealed on Friday fans will have to wait until October 23 to see how one of the most talked-about cliffhangers in cable TV history plays out.

Showrunner Scott Gimple announced the date for the season seven opener on day two of the annual San Diego Comic-Con fanfest, with the Hall H schedule cleared for networks to show off their biggest shows.

Viewers in 125 countries across the world will be able to see the "Walking Dead" opener, distributed internationally by Fox, within 24 hours of its US debut. "It's absolutely worth the wait," executive producer Robert Kirkman promised of the hotly-anticipated episode, directed by fellow exec producer Greg Nicotero.

The focus of season six was the debut of arch-nemesis Negan, who is seen in the comic books beating one of the best-loved characters to death. The producers of cable TV's most successful show ever have generated huge buzz among its millions of fans by building up to the moment. Season six teased audiences over whether the same character would be on the end of Negan's barbed-wire-covered baseball bat, "Lucille." But it wrapped amid controversy with the question unanswered, in an excruciating cliffhanger that sparked outrage online among fans who felt they were being manipulated.

A packed crowd in Comic-Con's 6,500-seat main venue was treated to new footage of season seven, although there were no big clues on the identity of Negan's victim.

### 'Intensity and violence'

Instead, fans were offered glimpses at The Kingdom, a group from Kirkman's comic books, and its leader Ezekiel and his pet tiger. Jeffery Dean Morgan, who plays Negan, opened the session walking behind seated cast members, menacingly wielding Lucille.

Among the stars at the panel were Andrew Lincoln who plays the central character, Rick Grimes-Norman Reedus, Lauren Cohan and Steven Yeun. "We all link arms, it's a really shitty start to the season, but hang on because we are heading to one of the greatest show-downs of the show," said Lincoln.

Season seven will be broken up, with the show returning for the final eight episodes of the run in February. Comic-Con attendees also heard from the cast and crew behind the show's spin-off, "Fear the Walking Dead," which returns after a mid-season break on August 21.

A new trailer showed the survivors, split up and facing a burgeoning apocalypse south of the border in Mexico. "They're separated and learning to survive on their own... there's a level of intensity and violence you haven't seen before," said executive producer Dave Erickson.

There was a moment of comic relief when "Fear" actor Lorenzo James Henrie said he had learned a lot about what it was like to be targeted and tormented through playing his character, Chris.

### Record-breaking

When a puzzled murmur began to spread throughout the hall, moderator Chris Hardwick had to point out to the nonplussed audience that the actor had said "bullying," not "bowling." Hall H—where participating studios and networks show off their most prestigious shows—was taken over in the afternoon by "Game of Thrones."

One of the big topics of conversation was a delayed start to the new season, which will be shot with the fictional land of Westeros finally experiencing winter. "Winter is here, and we've got to shoot in places with trees and wait for the leaves to turn," said showrunner David Benioff.

"Game of Thrones" enjoyed a record-breaking season six with more than 25 million viewers a week and 23 Emmy nominations, including best drama, which it won last year. Benioff and co-showrunner D.B. Weiss have announced a shortened run of episodes for the final two seasons while HBO has confirmed season seven will return in the summer of 2017.

The show usually premieres in April, but Benioff said the later start would allow more time to film during colder weather. He told the Comic-Con crowd the show would not finish shooting until February and that "there's no way to get the show out there until summer." — AFP

## Roger Ailes, a fallen TV titan who mixed politics and media

As a TV impresario and political puppet-master, Roger Ailes is unmatched in our time. He didn't invent anything, as Ted Turner did with "superstations" and cable news. He didn't assemble a media empire, as did his now-former boss Rupert Murdoch. Instead, with an uncanny instinct for matching messages with fiercely held desires, he has strip-mined the cultures of entertainment, news and politics that he began disrupting a half-century ago, and merged them as a form of propaganda retooled for the TV age.

Now, at age 76, Ailes has been vanquished from Fox News Channel, which he masterminded almost 20 years ago and had lorded over ever since. Little more than two weeks ago, a lawsuit filed by former Fox News host Gretchen Carlson charged him with sexual harassment. He denied her allegations, and those from other past and present female co-workers who spoke up after her. But with blistering speed his reign ended Thursday.

Where that leaves Fox News Channel, Ailes' grandest enterprise, is anybody's guess. It has been the ratings leader for 15 years and is hugely profitable for parent company 21st Century Fox. But more than one observer has opined that "Ailes IS Fox News Channel," that Fox News is an engine that only Ailes can gun to full speed.



NEW YORK: Fox News CEO Roger Ailes poses at Fox News on Sept. 29, 2006. — AP

Fox News was crafted in Ailes' own image - brash, combative, cunning; disdainful of mainstream media as elitist and liberal; and, like Ailes, positioned as a full-throated champion of the Common Man. Despite its "Fair & Balanced" creed, the network has flourished - or so say its chorus of detractors - as a conservative soap box writ large. Other right-wing outlets would follow (including the Newsmax magazine and website, and the digital Drudge Report). But among mass media, Fox News Channel stands unrivaled as the GOP house organ.

### Republican party

Ailes' ties to the Republican Party are strong and enduring, and his initiation as a GOP strategist was a doozy: Still in his 20s, Ailes was key to the video makeover of Richard Nixon that, in 1968, would help land him in the White House. By then, Ailes' skill as a television prodigy was clear. His entry-level job out of college, as a production assistant to a local Cleveland variety show, swiftly ballooned into that of executive producer of what by then was a coast-to-coast daytime hit.

Hosted by a former big-band singer, "The Mike Douglas Show" had a distinctive flair. With Ailes in charge, its 90 breezy minutes blended music with chat, and each week's five shows

teamed Douglas with a visiting co-host whose ranks included Ray Charles, Barbra Streisand, Muhammad Ali and even John Lennon. It was on the "Douglas" show that Ailes met famously untelegenic Nixon, there as a guest as he laid the groundwork for his presidential run. "Mr. Nixon, you need a media adviser," Ailes declared (according to biographer Gabriel Sherman in "The Loudest Voice in the Room").

"What's a media adviser?" asked Nixon. "I am," replied Ailes, fashioning the job on the spot. Ailes' pioneering efforts on Nixon's behalf wed politics with the veneer of TV journalism to humanize the candidate for viewers at home. TV specials were staged as town hall meetings that had Nixon fielding softball questions from hand-picked supporters. It was politics, faux-news and entertainment all in one.

Thus did Ailes help validate the title of Joe McGinniss' campaign tell-all, "The Selling of the President 1968." Ailes would find no role awaiting him in the new administration, not after the cutting remarks the book quoted him as making about the graceless candidate he had helped sell voters on. Never mind. He was on his way.

### Launch of Fox News

By the time Fox News Channel launched on Oct. 7, 1996, Ailes had enjoyed a robust career that included, in the 1970s, a stint running a right-wing news service that presaged Fox News. He had done political consulting for President Ronald Reagan and for Vice President George H.W. Bush in his victorious 1988 presidential race. He had brought right-wing radio sensation Rush Limbaugh to TV in a weekday show that premiered in 1993 and aired four seasons.

Meanwhile, he was running the financial network CNBC, and had launched a second NBC-owned cable network, America's Talking, programmed with practical advice designed to help "normal people" as opposed to the "freaks" who watched "dysfunctional" talk shows, as Ailes explained at the time with his typical bluntness.

By then, he was claiming he was done with politics: "I've gotten over all the cynicism of politics," he insisted. Maybe so. He had always been "more interested in the political potential of TV than he was in politics itself," according to Tom Junod's 2011 Esquire profile, since early on he had deduced that "television was by definition a political medium."

In early 1996, when America's Talking was scrapped to clear the way for NBC's forthcoming MSNBC, Ailes quit in a huff. But, teaming up with Murdoch, he was game to join the cable-news fray on his own terms: courting viewers who felt disenfranchised by CNN and other media outlets they scorned as left-wing, and who would flock to a network with populist appeal.

Ailes' new network would also offer eye appeal, at least for the guys in the audience. News analyst Andrew Tyndall this week cited as a Fox News hallmark "the unreconstructed stereotypes ... of the genders" in the form of "crusty curmudgeonly white men paired with mini-skirted leggy blondes." However retrograde such a strategy was, it, like Fox News' political agenda, was intrinsic to Ailes' world view. And, like Fox News' phantom "Fair & Balanced" policy, using women as eye candy has served the network well. But time ran out for Ailes. Judging from the allegations that triggered his whirlwind removal, seeing women as eye candy didn't serve him so well. It led to the downfall of this peerless TV titan. — AP



SAN DIEGO: Actors Iwan Rheon (L) and Faye Marsay attend the "Game of Thrones" panel during Comic-Con International 2016 at San Diego Convention Center on Friday. — AFP

## 'Game of Thrones' blames delayed episodes on winter

"Game of Thrones" showrunner David Benioff told fans at Comic-Con International on Friday a delay in screening the new series had been unavoidable, because "winter is here."

The hit fantasy epic has been teasing winter's arrival since its pilot episode, and with the season six finale entitled "The Winds of Winter," the camera crew has been forced to wait for colder weather. "Winter is here, and we've got to shoot in places with trees and wait for the leaves to turn," Benioff told Comic-Con's packed 6,500-seat Hall H.

He was joined at the San Diego fanfest by cast members including Liam Cunningham, Sophie Turner and the departing Kristian Nairn, as well as director Miguel Sapochnik. Benioff and co-showrunner D.B. Weiss had already announced a shortened run of episodes for the final two seasons while HBO has confirmed season seven will return in the summer of 2017. The show usually premieres in April, but Benioff said the later start would allow more time to film during colder weather. He told the Comic-Con crowd the show would not finish shooting until February and that "there's no way to get the show out there until summer."

"Game of Thrones" tells the story of noble families vying for control of the Iron Throne, all the while keeping one eye on the "White Walkers" leading hordes of the undead toward an invasion from the North. It enjoyed a record-breaking season six with more than 25 million viewers a week and 23 Emmy nominations, including best drama, which it won last year. Season six of "Game of Thrones" was the first to move beyond George R.R. Martin's "A Song of Ice and Fire" novels. "It's still ultimately George's imagination that gave us these characters, that gave us this world... Hopefully we're still living out the spirit of George's imagination," Benioff said.

Nairn received a standing ovation from the Comic-Con crowd, who chanted "Hodor, Hodor" in honor of one of the show's best loved characters. "I did not expect it to be so crazy, I'm really, really flattered—it's blown my mind," the 40-year-old Northern Irish actor said.

The panel were asked who would win the Iron Throne and Sapochnik answered that he "would be very happy if they shared it, but I don't think that is going to happen." Iwan Rheon, who plays the sadistic Ramsay Bolton, got cheers from the audience when he said he would "melt the thing down and have a democracy." — AFP