

# Man Pleads Guilty in P2P Piracy Probe

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A Georgia man is the fifth defendant to go down in connection with a piracy ring that used BitTorrent technology to illegally distribute movies, software and games.

A fifth defendant pleaded guilty Tuesday in connection with a piracy ring that used BitTorrent technology to distribute copyrighted movies, software, games and music over a peer-to-peer network.

Sam Kuonen, 24, of Columbus, Ga., pleaded guilty to charges of conspiracy to commit criminal copyright infringement and criminal copyright infringement in violation of the Family Entertainment Copyright Act, according to officials at the U.S. Department of Justice. The plea was entered in U.S. District Court in Kansas. Kuonen faces up to five years in prison, a fine of \$250,000 and three years of supervised release when he is scheduled to be sentenced on July 16.

Kuonen's conviction arose from an ongoing crackdown involving ICE and the FBI as part of the Computer and Technology Crime High Tech Response Team (CATCH), a San Diego task force of specially trained prosecutors and law enforcement officers who focus on high-tech crime. Nicknamed Operation D-Elite, the investigation that snared Kuonen targeted the illegal distribution of copyrighted material on P2P networks employing the BitTorrent, a P2P communications protocol for file sharing.

Operation D-Elite put a bull's eye on members of P2P network known as Elite Torrents. Investigators claim that at its prime, the Elite Torrents

network attracted more than 133,000 members and facilitated the illegal distribution of more than 17,800 titles - including movies, software, music and games - which were downloaded more than 2 million times. On May 25, 2005, federal agents shut down the Elite Torrents network by taking control of its main server.

Kuonen was an "uploader" to the Elite Torrents network, supplying the network with the first copy of a particular movie or other piece of content so that it could be made available for download to the entire network.

Federal authorities credited the Motion Picture Association of America for providing their assistance in the investigation.

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