

NinjaVideo founder pleads to copyright charges

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A man uses a laptop computer at a wireless cafe. A founder of the NinjaVideo website that offered downloads of current movies and television shows pleaded guilty Friday to criminal copyright violations, officials said.

A founder of the NinjaVideo website that offered downloads of current movies and television shows pleaded guilty Friday to criminal copyright violations, officials said.

Matthew David Howard Smith, 23, of Raleigh, North Carolina, pleaded guilty in Virginia federal court. At sentencing, scheduled for December 16, he faces a maximum penalty of five years in prison for each count, the [Justice Department](#) said.

According to [court documents](#), Smith was a founder of NinjaVideo, which operated from February 2008 until it was shut down by law enforcement in June 2010.

The site enabled millions of visitors to illegally download copies of movies and television programs still playing in theaters, and others that had not yet been released.

Users were not charged but were asked to make donations, which provided them access to private

forum boards that contained a wider range of material.

Smith was among four Americans who along with a Greek national were indicted on [criminal charges](#) earlier this month.

Officials said the operators allegedly collected more than \$500,000 during the website's two-and-a-half years of operation.

The others charged were Hana Amal Beshara, 29, of New Jersey; Joshua David Evans, 34, of Washington state; Zoi Mertzanis, 36, of Greece; and Jeremy Lynn Andrew, 33, of Oregon.

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