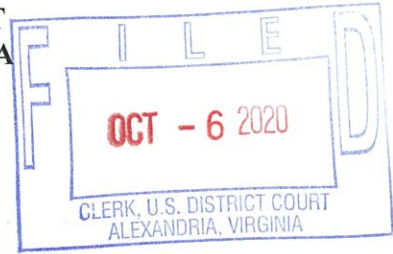


IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA  
Alexandria Division



MICROSOFT CORPORATION, a )  
Washington corporation, and FS- )  
ISAC, INC., a Delaware corporation, )  
 )  
Plaintiffs, )  
 )  
v. )  
 )  
JOHN DOES 1-2, CONTROLLING )  
A COMPUTER BOTNET AND )  
THEREBY INJURING PLAINTIFFS, )  
AND THEIR CUSTOMERS AND )  
MEMBERS, )  
 )  
Defendants. )

Civil Action No: 1:20 cv 1171

FILED UNDER SEAL PURSUANT  
TO LOCAL CIVIL RULE 5

**BRIEF IN SUPPORT OF PLAINTIFFS' MOTION FOR PROTECTIVE ORDER  
TEMPORARILY SEALING DOCUMENTS**

Plaintiffs submit the following memorandum in support of its Motion for a Protective Order Sealing Documents.

**BACKGROUND**

Plaintiffs have filed a Complaint and an *Ex Parte* Application for an Emergency Temporary Restraining Order and Order to Show Cause re Preliminary Injunction (“TRO Application”) to prevent the activities of John Doe Defendants 1 and 2 (collectively “Defendants”) who are engaged in harmful and malicious Internet activities directed at Microsoft, its customers, and the general public. Plaintiffs seek *ex parte* relief in the TRO Application that will cease the irreparable harm resulting from Defendants’ conduct. Plaintiffs seek *ex parte* relief under seal because advance public disclosure or notice of the requested relief would allow Defendants to evade such relief and further prosecution of this action, thereby

perpetuating the irreparable harm at issue. The reasons for Plaintiffs' request are set forth in detail in the TRO Application filed concurrently herewith. Therefore, Plaintiffs request that this case and all documents filed in this case be sealed pending execution of the temporary restraining order sought in Plaintiffs' TRO Application. Plaintiffs' requested sealing order is narrowly tailored to impose the least restriction on the public's right of access to information as possible. Plaintiffs request that all sealed documents be immediately unsealed upon execution of the temporary restraining order.

### ARGUMENT

The First Amendment provides for public access to the courts, but that right of access is not without limits. *Va. Dep't of State Police v. Wash. Post*, 386 F.3d 567, 575 (4th Cir. 2004). Indeed, "the trial court has supervisory power over its own records and may, in its discretion, seal documents if the public's right of access is outweighed by competing interests." *In re The Knight Publ'g Co.*, 743 F.2d 231, 235 (4th Cir. 1984); *see also Rushford v. New Yorker Magazine*, 846 F.2d 249, 253 (4th Cir. 1988) (stating that to place documents under seal, the court must determine "that the denial [of access] serves an important governmental interest and that there is no less restrictive way to serve that governmental interest.").

Under Fourth Circuit law, the district court must do the following prior to sealing court records: (1) give public notice of the request to seal and allow interested parties a reasonable opportunity to object, (2) consider less drastic alternatives to sealing the documents, and (3) provide specific reasons and factual findings supporting its decision to seal the documents and for rejecting the alternatives. *Ashcraft v. Conoco*, 218 F.3d 282, 288 (4th Cir. 2000) (citing *In re Knight Pub.[sic] Co.*, 743 F.2d 231, 235-36 (4th Cir. 1984)); *In re U.S. for an Order Pursuant to 18 U.S.C. Section 2703(D)*, 707 F.3d 283, 294 (4th Cir. 2013) (finding no error to seal

documents and noting “[t]he mere fact that a case is high profile in nature does not necessarily justify public access”).

The Federal Rules of Civil Procedure also recognize the important public and judicial interest in protecting confidential business information. *See* Fed. R. Civ. P. 26(c)(1)(G) (empowering courts to order “that a trade secret or other confidential research, development, or commercial information not be revealed or be revealed only in a specified way”). Likewise, Supreme Court and Fourth Circuit authority recognize the necessity of non-public *ex parte* proceedings. *See Granny Goose Foods, Inc. v. Brotherhood of Teamsters & Auto Truck Drivers, Local No. 70*, 415 U.S. 423, 439(1974) (“Ex parte temporary restraining orders are no doubt necessary in certain circumstances. . . .”); *Hoechst Diafoil Co. v. Nan Ya Plastics Corp.*, 174 F.3d 411, 422 (4th Cir. 1999) (“[T]emporary restraining orders may be issued without full notice, even, under certain circumstances, *ex parte*[.]”); *Bell v. True*, 356 F. Supp. 2d 613, 617 n.3 (W.D. Va. 2005) (“Material allowed to be filed *ex parte* will of course be kept sealed, to prevent its disclosure outside of the court.”); *see also Media Gen. Operations, Inc. v. Buchanan*, 417 F.3d 424, 429 (4th Cir. 2005) (upholding sealing of *ex parte* search warrants based on risk that evidence will be destroyed).<sup>1</sup>

In this case, Plaintiffs’ rights and interests in protecting its ability to obtain emergency *ex parte* temporary relief, and the necessity of sealing its pleadings is paramount over any competing public interest to *immediate* access to the information Microsoft requests be sealed. If Plaintiffs’ papers are not sealed, the relief sought would very likely be rendered fruitless and

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<sup>1</sup> This Court has recognized that “private interests, based not on the content of the material to be sealed, but instead on the relationship of the parties, might also have the potential to override even the stronger First Amendment presumptive right of public access.” *Level 3 Commc’ns, LLC v. Limelight Networks, Inc.*, 611 F. Supp. 2d 572, 583 (E.D. Va. 2009) (Davis, J.).

there is a substantial risk Defendants would destroy evidence. Defendants are highly-sophisticated cybercriminals. They access Microsoft's services without authorization; hack into high-value computer networks; install banking trojans and malware on the networks to gain and maintain long-term, surreptitious access to that network; and locate and exfiltrate sensitive information off of the networks. Declaration of Jason Lyons In Support Of Microsoft's TRO Application ("Lyons Decl.") ¶¶ 31-36. If Defendants knew Plaintiffs sought the relief set forth in the TRO Application, they could quickly adapt the command and control infrastructure used to secretly establish themselves on a victim's network. *Id.* ¶57. Indeed, evidence shows that in the past, when Defendants became aware of efforts to mitigate or investigate their activities, they took steps to conceal their activities and to conceal the injury that had been caused to their victims, making it more difficult for their victims to adequately assess the damage or take steps to mitigate that injury going forward. *Id.*

Given Plaintiffs' actions against similar unlawful Internet activity, even disclosing that Plaintiffs has initiated this case risks giving Defendants the opportunity to change their command and control infrastructure. Based on similar actions, it is likely that Defendants in this case will take similar steps to destroy evidence and move their command and control infrastructure if they are given notice of the pending legal action against them.

The harm that would be caused by the public filing of Plaintiffs' Complaint and moving papers would far outweigh the public's right to access to that information. There is no need for the public to have immediate access to the Complaint, TRO Application, and supporting documents while Plaintiffs is seeking *ex parte* relief which will only be effective if these materials remain under seal. Applying the balancing test set forth in governing law demonstrates that Microsoft's interest in obtaining effective relief outweighs any immediate public right to

disclosure.

Plaintiffs only seeks to seal such information for a limited period of time, until after effective *ex parte* temporary relief has been obtained. After such point, sealing will no longer be necessary, and Plaintiffs will immediately commence efforts to provide Defendants notice of the preliminary injunction hearing and service of the Complaint—at which point, all documents will be unsealed and the public will be given full access to these proceedings. Plaintiffs, upon execution of the *ex parte* relief, will file with the Clerk of the Court a Notice that the temporary restraining order has been executed.

Should, however, the Court decide not to grant the *ex parte* relief Plaintiffs requests, Plaintiffs ask that such materials remain sealed for an indefinite period, as public disclosure or notice absent the *ex parte* relief requested would facilitate Defendants' harmful and malicious Internet activities.

Given the limited period of sealing as an alternative that balances the public interest in access with Plaintiffs' important interests in maintaining these materials under seal for a brief period of time, granting the instant request to seal is warranted and consistent with the legal framework for addressing this issue.

### CONCLUSION

Therefore, for all the foregoing reasons, Plaintiffs requests that this case and the following documents in particular be kept under seal in accordance with Fed. R. Civ. P. 26(c)(1) and Local Civil Rule 5, pending execution of the *ex parte* relief sought in the TRO Application:

1. The instant Motion for Protective Order Sealing Documents and accompanying documents, including the Brief in support of this Motion;
2. The declaration of Gabriel M. Ramsey in Support of Motion for Protective Order Sealing Documents;
3. Plaintiffs' Complaint;

4. Plaintiffs' *Ex Parte* Application for an Emergency Temporary Restraining Order and Order to Show Cause re Preliminary Injunction and accompanying documents;
5. The declaration of Jason Lyons in Support of Plaintiffs' *Ex Parte* Application for an Emergency Temporary Restraining Order and Order to Show Cause re Preliminary Injunction and attachments thereto;
6. The declaration of Rodelio G. Fiñones in Support of Plaintiffs' *Ex Parte* Application for an Emergency Temporary Restraining Order and Order to Show Cause re Preliminary Injunction and attachments thereto;
7. The declaration of Steven Silberstein in Support of Plaintiffs' *Ex Parte* Application for an Emergency Temporary Restraining Order and Order to Show Cause re Preliminary Injunction and attachments thereto;
8. The declaration of Vikram Thakur in Support of Plaintiffs' *Ex Parte* Application for an Emergency Temporary Restraining Order and Order to Show Cause re Preliminary Injunction and attachments thereto;
9. The declaration of Jean-Ian Boutin in Support of Plaintiffs' *Ex Parte* Application for an Emergency Temporary Restraining Order and Order to Show Cause re Preliminary Injunction and attachments thereto;
10. The declaration of Kayvan M. Ghaffari in Support of Plaintiffs' *Ex Parte* Application for an Emergency Temporary Restraining Order and Order to Show Cause re Preliminary Injunction and attachments thereto; and
11. [Proposed] Preliminary Injunction Order and accompanying documents.

Plaintiffs respectfully request that the case and these materials be sealed pending execution of the *ex parte* temporary relief sought in Plaintiffs' Application for TRO. Plaintiffs respectfully requests that immediately upon the execution of the temporary restraining order, the instant case be unsealed and the foregoing documents be filed in the public docket. Upon execution of the *ex parte* relief, Plaintiffs will file with the Clerk of the Court a Notice that the temporary restraining order has been executed. Plaintiffs further requests that upon execution of the temporary restraining order, Plaintiffs be permitted to disclose such materials as it deems necessary, including to commence its efforts to provide Defendants notice of the preliminary injunction hearing and service of the Complaint.

Plaintiffs respectfully request that should the Court decide not to grant the *ex parte*

temporary relief requested in Plaintiffs' TRO Application, that the materials be sealed indefinitely.

Dated: October 5, 2020

Respectfully submitted,



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