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2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17	Facsimile: (213) 894-2474 Facsimile: (213) 894-2380 Email: gary.plessman@usdoj. Attorneys for Plaintiff United S UNITED STATES CENTRAL DISTRIC UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, Plaintiff, V. VALUECLICK, INC., HI-SPEED MEDIA, INC., and E-BABYLON, INC.,	2000 MAR 13 PM 12: 43	RZx)
21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28	Plaintiff, the United States of America, acting upon notification and authorization to the Attorney General by the Federal Trade Commission ("FTC" or "Commission"), pursuant to Section 16(a) (1) of the Federal Trade Commission Act ("FTC Act"), 15 U.S.C. § 56(a) (1), for its complaint alleges: 1. Plaintiff brings this action under Sections 5(a), 5(m) (1) (A), 13(b), 16(a) and 19 of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. \$\$ 45(a), 45(m) (1) (A), 53(b), 56(a), and 57b, and under Section 7(a) of the Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography and Marketing Act of 2003 ("CAN-SPAM" or the "CAN-SPAM Act"), Complaint Page 1 of 18		

15 U.S.C. § 7706(a), to obtain monetary civil penalties, a permanent injunction, and other equitable relief for defendants' violations of Section 5(a) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45(a), and Section 5(a) of CAN-SPAM, 15 U.S.C. § 7704(a).

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

2. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction over this matter pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331, 1337(a), 1345, and 1355 and 15 U.S.C. §§ 45(m)(1)(A), 53(b), 56(a) and 57b. This action arises under 15 U.S.C. §§ 45(a) and 7706(a).

3. Venue is proper in this District under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1391(b) and (c), 1395(a), and 15 U.S.C. § 53(b).

DEFENDANTS

4. Defendant ValueClick, Inc. ("ValueClick") is a Delaware corporation with its principal office or place of business at 30699 Russell Ranch Road, Suite 250, Westlake Village, CA 91361. ValueClick resides in the Central District of California and transacts business within this District and throughout the United States. ValueClick directs, formulates and controls the practices of, and shares common officership with, the other named Defendants, which are wholly-owned subsidiaries of ValueClick.

5. Defendant Hi-Speed Media, Inc. ("Hi-Speed Media") is a California corporation with its principal office or place of business at 30699 Russell Ranch Road, Suite 250, Westlake Village, CA 91361. Hi-Speed Media resides in the Central District of California and transacts business within this District and throughout the United States.

 Defendant E-Babylon, Inc. ("E-Babylon") is a California corporation with its principal office or place of business at 30699 Russell Ranch Road, Suite 250, Westlake Village, CA 91361.

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E-Babylon resides in the Central District of California and transacts business within this District and throughout the United States.

7. Defendant ValueClick operates its lead generation business through its wholly-owned subsidiary Hi-Speed Media. Lead generation is the process by which ValueClick connects consumers to advertisers seeking to sell goods or services. Hi-Speed Media operates or controls, either directly or through other subsidiaries, a variety of websites including GenerousGenie.com and GiveAwayCafe.com. Defendant ValueClick also operates under the names ValueClick Media and PriceRunner USA.

8. Since July 2004, Defendants have formulated, directed, controlled, or participated in the acts and practices set forth in this complaint.

DEFINITIONS

9. "Electronic mail message" (or "email") means a message sent to a unique email address. 15 U.S.C. § 7702(6).

10. "Electronic mail address" means a destination, commonly expressed as a string of characters, consisting of a unique user name or mailbox (commonly referred to as the "local part") and a reference to an Internet domain (commonly referred to as the "domain part"), whether or not displayed, to which an email message can be sent or delivered. 15 U.S.C. § 7702(5).

11. "Commercial electronic mail message" means any email message the primary purpose of which is the commercial advertisement or promotion of a commercial product or service (including the content on an Internet website operated for commercial purposes). 15 U.S.C. § 7702(2).

12. "Initiate," when used with respect to a commercial email

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message, means to originate or transmit such message or to procure the origination or transmission of such message. 15 U.S.C. § 7702(9).

13. "Landing page" means, in online marketing, a specific web page that a visitor reaches after clicking a link or advertisement. This page usually showcases content that is an extension of the link or ad.

14. "**Procure**," when used with respect to the initiation of a commercial email message, means intentionally to pay or provide other consideration to, or induce, another person to initiate such a message on one's behalf. 15 U.S.C. § 7702(12).

15. "Protected computer" means a computer which is used in interstate or foreign commerce or communication, including a computer located outside the United States that is used in a manner that affects interstate or foreign commerce or communication of the United States. 15 U.S.C. § 7702(13); 18 U.S.C. § 1030(e)(2)(B).

16. "Sender" means a person who initiates a commercial email message and whose product, service, or Internet website is advertised or promoted by the message. 15 U.S.C. § 7702(16).

DEFENDANTS VALUECLICK'S AND HI-SPEED MEDIA'S

MARKETING PRACTICES

17. Since January 2005, and continuing to the present, Defendants ValueClick and Hi-Speed Media (hereinafter, "the lead generation Defendants"), in connection with promotions and advertisements on their websites, have offered consumers purportedly free merchandise, such as iPods, laptop computers, and Visa gift cards.

18. The lead generation Defendants advertise and market their offers through email and Web-based ads. The lead generation

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Defendants' emails contain subject lines such as: "Free PS3 for survey"; "let us buy you a 42 inch plasma tv! Just type in your zip code"; "we're giving away a Visa gift card pending participation in our presidential survey"; and "Free Apple iPhone for Daniel." The lead generation Defendants' Web-based ads contain similar representations: "CONGRATULATIONS! Select your FREE Plasma TV." (Such products and items are referred to herein as "promised free merchandise.")

19. Many of the lead generation Defendants' emails and Webbased ads represent, expressly or by implication, that the consumer viewing the message has won a contest, or has been specially selected to receive a gift or prize.

20. The lead generation Defendants' emails and Web-based ads contain links that, when clicked on, take one to a "landing page" operated by the lead generation Defendants or their affiliates. Each landing page recapitulates and expands upon the lead generation Defendants' initial promised free merchandise offer.

21. The lead generation Defendants do not clearly and conspicuously disclose that to obtain the promised free merchandise one must incur expenses or other obligations. A consumer must accept (and often pay for) - in the lead generation Defendants' parlance, "complete" or "participate in" - a certain number of goods or services promoted by third-parties to qualify for the promised free merchandise that the lead generation Defendants promote in their emails and Web-based ads. Moreover, the lead generation Defendants do not clearly and conspicuously disclose the costs and obligations associated with participating in third-party promotions, such as applying and qualifying for credit cards or automobile loans.

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22. On each landing page, the lead generation Defendants request the consumer to enter his or her email address, followed by his or her name and mailing address. Once the consumer has submitted his or her personal information, the lead generation Defendants lead the consumer through a series of web pages containing advertisements for various goods and services from third parties. Unbeknownst to the consumer, this is only an introductory tier of "optional" advertisements and offers, after which are three additional tiers of offers that the consumer will have to navigate before he or she can qualify for the promised free merchandise. "Optional" offers do not qualify the consumer for the promised free merchandise.

23. After the consumer navigates the lead generation Defendants' "optional promotions" - often so multitudinous as to take up scores of consecutive computer screens, each with multiple offers - he or she eventually reaches a link that, when clicked, takes the consumer to the first of three tiers of offers in which the consumer must participate to obtain the promised free merchandise.

24. The lead generation Defendants group the tiers of offers that qualify the consumer for the promised free merchandise into three categories: Silver, Gold, and Platinum. In each category, there are numerous offers. The lead generation Defendants require the consumer to "participate in" multiple offers from each category to obtain the promised free merchandise.

25. Clicking on each offer reveals what the consumer must do to "participate in" the offer. In some cases, "participating in" an offer entails paying money or incurring some other detriment, such as qualifying and applying for credit cards. The lead

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generation Defendants require the consumer to participate in multiple offers before he or she can progress to the next tier of offers.

26. Some of the offers have free-trial periods, but require the consumer to participate for a minimum period of time to qualify for the lead generation Defendants' promised free merchandise thereby causing consumers to incur costs they cannot recover. In some instances, the minimum period is longer than the free-trial period. Moreover, many such offers contain negative option components in which the consumer who does not cancel within the free trial period will be billed automatically.

27. In some instances, the lead generation Defendants require the consumer to solicit up to five friends to participate in the lead generation Defendants' program as a condition to awarding the consumer with the promised free merchandise. If all the friends do not complete all of their required offers, the lead generation Defendants do not award the consumer with the promised free merchandise.

28. In many instances, the consumer stops trying to qualify for the lead generation Defendants' promised free merchandise, either because of the cost involved or the time and effort required. Although the consumer has expended money or incurred other obligations in pursuit of the lead generation Defendants' promised free merchandise, because he or she has not completed all of the lead generation Defendants' required third-party promotions, the consumer does not receive the promised free merchandise.

29. In most instances, it is impossible for the consumer to qualify for the lead generation Defendants' promised free

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merchandise without spending money.

DEFENDANTS VALUECLICK'S AND HI-SPEED MEDIA'S

EMAIL PRACTICES

30. Since at least January 1, 2005, and continuing to the present, the lead generation Defendants have initiated the transmission of commercial email messages to protected computers. The primary purpose of these commercial email messages has been the commercial advertisement or promotion of Internet websites operated for a commercial purpose by the lead generation Defendants.

31. The lead generation Defendants are "initiators" with respect to an email message when they have either originated or transmitted a message themselves or have procured the origination or transmission of a message through payments or other consideration, or inducements, to others.

32. The lead generation Defendants are "senders" with respect to an email message when they have initiated a message and it is the lead generation Defendants' websites that are being advertised or promoted by such message.

33. In numerous instances, to induce consumers to open and read their commercial emails, the lead generation Defendants have initiated commercial email messages that contain subject headers that misrepresent the content or subject matter of the message, including, but not limited to, false representations that consumers have been specially selected to receive free products or services.

DEFENDANTS VALUECLICK'S, HI-SPEED MEDIA'S, AND E-BABYLON'S PRACTICES REGARDING INFORMATION SECURITY AND SENSITIVE CUSTOMER FINANCIAL INFORMATION

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Since at least 2004, Defendant ValueClick, and its 34. wholly-owned subsidiary, Defendant Hi-Speed Media, have marketed and sold consumer products through the Internet at the following sites ("HSM sites"), which together form the ValueClick E-Commerce Network: HotProductOutlet.com, InkBlvd.com, Jevene.com (now known as Oasiderm.com), Life-visage.com, and Yourinkstation.com.

In June 2005, in order to expand its online business, 35. Defendant ValueClick acquired as a wholly-owned subsidiary Defendant E-Babylon, an e-commerce company that marketed and sold printer accessories such as ink jet and toner cartridges. Defendant ValueClick added E-Babylon's e-commerce business to the existing Hi-Speed Media business and the associated websites to the ValueClick E-Commerce Network. As a result, Defendants ValueClick, Hi-Speed Media, and E-Babylon marketed and sold consumer products through the following additional sites acquired with Defendant E-Babylon ("E-Babylon sites"): 00InkJet.com, 007inkjets.com, 111inkjets.com, 123digitalpcs.com, 123inkjets.com, 123LaserToner.com, 411InkJets.com, 4YourInkPrinter.com, 911InkJets.com, ABCInkJets.com, DiscoverInk.com, FreeCartridges.com, HappyInks.com, IdirectShopping.com, Ink2All.com, InkJet4Sale.com, InkJetBroker.com, InkJetOrder.com, MaxInkJets.com, OrderMyInk.com, OutofInk.com, PetersInkJets.com, ProInkJets.com, SpectrumInks.com, and WhenUPrint.com.

36. In order to make purchases from any of these websites, consumers must pay using a credit or debit card. To complete these transactions, consumers must provide personal information, 25 including the consumer's first and last name, billing address, 26 shipping address, phone number, fax number, email address, password, order identification number, credit card number, and

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credit card expiration date. Defendants ValueClick, Hi-Speed Media, and E-Babylon store this information within databases that support or connect to the websites.

37. In addition to these types of information, Defendants' HSM sites and some of the E-Babylon sites also collected and retained in databases the three-digit credit card verification codes ("CVV2 codes") provided by consumers in order to complete transactions on these websites. CVV2 codes, which are printed on the back of the cards, are particularly sensitive because they are used to verify credit card transactions when the cards are not present, such as in online or telephone transactions. Possession of CVV2 code information would make it significantly easier for identity thieves to use stolen credit card information for fraudulent purchases.

38. Since July 2004, Defendants ValueClick and Hi-Speed Media have disseminated or have caused to be disseminated a privacy policy on the HSM sites, including but not necessarily limited to the attached Exhibit A, containing the following statements:

The ValueClick Network employs industry standard security measures to ensure the security of all data. Any data that is stored on ValueClick's servers is treated as proprietary and confidential and is not available to the public. ValueClick also encrypts sensitive information such as passwords and financial data. ValueClick has an internal security policy with respect to the confidentiality of customer and other data, allowing access only to those employees or third parties who need to know such information for the purpose of effectively delivering ValueClick products and services by means of user login and password The ValueClick Network routinely requirements. evaluates its data security practices to identify security threats or opportunities for improvement. (Exhibit A, www.inkblvd.com Privacy Policy, July 7, 2004)

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39. From the time of the acquisition of Defendant E-Babylon

until July 26, 2006, Defendants ValueClick, Hi-Speed Media, and E-Babylon disseminated or caused to be disseminated a privacy policy on the E-Babylon sites, including but not necessarily limited to the attached Exhibit B, containing the following statements: At our site you can be assured that your Personally Identifiable Information is secure, consistent with current industry standards. ... In addition, your Personally Identifiable Information resides on a secure server that only selected key personnel and contractors have access to via password. We encrypt your Personally Identifiable Information and thereby prevent unauthorized parties from viewing such information when it is transmitted to us. (Exhibit B, www.123inkjets.com Privacy Policy)

40. On July 26, 2006, Defendants ValueClick, Hi-Speed Media, and E-Babylon amended the privacy policies on the E-Babylon sites to make them identical to the privacy policies on the HSM sites, with the same statements regarding security and encryption as are described in Paragraph 39.

41. From at least July 2004 to November 2006 for the HSM sites, and from the acquisition of E-Babylon to November 2006 for the E-Babylon sites, Defendants ValueClick, Hi-Speed Media, and E-Babylon did not encrypt sensitive information consistent with industry standards. Instead, Defendants stored sensitive customer information collected through the HSM sites in a database without any encryption, and Defendants stored sensitive customer information collected through the E-Babylon sites in a database using a nonstandard, proprietary form of encryption. This latter form of encryption did not use the type of extensively-tested algorithms found in industry-standard systems, but instead utilized a simple alphabetic substitution system that was subject to significant vulnerabilities.

42. Between at least June 2005 and late 2006, the E-Babylon

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sites were vulnerable to commonly known or reasonably foreseeable attacks from third parties attempting to obtain access to customer information stored in Defendants' databases, including but not limited to, web-based application attacks such as "Structured Query Language" (SQL) injection attacks. Such attacks occur when an attacker enters certain characters or commands in the address (or URL) bar of a standard web browser in order to manipulate a web application and thereby gain access to information contained in databases supporting the application. Here, the vulnerability affected databases containing consumer credit card information submitted to E-Babylon sites, which was maintained in a nonsecure During the relevant period, SQL injection attacks were a form. well-known and well-publicized form of hacking attack, and solutions to prevent such attacks were readily-available and inexpensive.

VIOLATIONS OF THE FTC ACT

43. As set forth below, Defendants have violated Section 5(a) of the FTC Act in connection with advertising, offering, marketing, and promoting of advertised offers.

COUNT I

44. Through the means described in Paragraphs 17-29, Defendants ValueClick and Hi-Speed Media have represented, expressly or by implication, that Defendants ValueClick's and Hi-Speed Media's advertised offers are without cost or obligation.

45. Defendants ValueClick and Hi-Speed Media have failed to disclose or to disclose adequately to consumers the material terms and conditions of their program, including:

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 that consumers must pay money or other consideration to participate in Defendants

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ValueClick's and Hi-Speed Media's program; and

b. the costs and obligations for participating in Defendants ValueClick's and Hi-Speed Media's program.

46. As a result of the representation set forth in Paragraph 44, Defendants ValueClick's and Hi-Speed Media's failure to disclose or to disclose adequately the material information set forth in Paragraph 45 is deceptive, and violates Section 5(a) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45(a).

COUNT II

47. Through the means described in Paragraphs 38-40, Defendants ValueClick, Hi-Speed Media, and E-Babylon have represented, expressly or by implication, that they encrypt the sensitive information they collect through their websites consistent with industry standards.

48. In truth and in fact, these Defendants have not encrypted the sensitive information they collect through their websites consistent with industry standards. In particular, Defendants ValueClick and Hi-Speed Media did not encrypt sensitive customer information for customers making purchases on HSM sites, and Defendants ValueClick, Hi-Speed Media, and E-Babylon encrypted sensitive customer information for customers making purchases on E-Babylon sites using only an insecure form of alphabetic substitution that is not consistent with, and less protective than, industry-standard encryption. Therefore, the representation set forth in Paragraph 47 was false or misleading and constituted a deceptive act or practice in violation of Section 5(a) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45(a).

COUNT III

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49. Through the means described in Paragraphs 38-40, Defendants ValueClick, Hi-Speed Media, and E-Babylon have represented, expressly or by implication, that they implemented reasonable and appropriate measures to protect against unauthorized access to the sensitive personal information they obtained from customers.

50. In truth and in fact, these Defendants did not implement reasonable and appropriate measures to protect against unauthorized access to the sensitive personal information they obtained from customers. In particular, the E-Babylon sites of Defendants ValueClick, Hi-Speed Media, and E-Babylon and the associated databases were vulnerable to a commonly known and reasonably foreseeable type of attack known as an SQL injection, which, if exploited, would have allowed access by unauthorized individuals to sensitive customer financial information. Moreover, because this information was stored without effective encryption, it was particularly vulnerable to compromise. Therefore, the representation set forth in Paragraph 49 was false or misleading and constituted a deceptive act or practice in violation of Section 5(a) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45(a).

VIOLATION OF THE CAN-SPAM ACT

51. The CAN-SPAM Act, 15 U.S.C. § 7701 <u>et seq</u>., became effective on January 1, 2004, and has since remained in full force and effect.

52. Section 5(a)(2) of CAN-SPAM, 15 U.S.C. § 7704(a)(2), states:

It is unlawful for any person to initiate the transmission, to a protected computer, of a commercial electronic mail message, if such person has actual knowledge, or knowledge fairly implied on the basis of objective

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circumstances, that a subject heading of the message would be likely to mislead a recipient, acting reasonably under the 1 circumstances, about a material fact regarding the contents or subject matter of the message 2 (consistent with the criteria used in enforcement of section 5 of the Federal Trade 3 Commission Act (15 U.S.C. 45)). 4 53. Section 7(e) of CAN-SPAM, 15 U.S.C. § 7706(e), states 5 that in any action to enforce compliance through an injunction 6 with Section 5(a)(2) and other specified sections of CAN-SPAM, the 7 FTC need not allege or prove the state of mind required by such 8 sections. 9 54. Section 7(a) of the CAN-SPAM Act states: 10 [T] his Act shall be enforced by the [FTC] as if the violation of this Act were an unfair or 11 deceptive act or practice proscribed under section 18(a)(1)(B) of the [FTC Act] (15 12 U.S.C. 57a(a)(1)(B)). 13 COUNT IV 14 55. Through the means described in Paragraphs 30-33, 15 Defendants ValueClick and Hi-Speed Media have initiated the 16 transmission, to protected computers, of commercial email messages 17 that contained subject headings that would be likely to mislead a 18 recipient, acting reasonably under the circumstances, about a 19 material fact regarding the contents or subject matter of the 20 message. 21 56. Therefore, Defendants ValueClick's and Hi-Speed Media's 22 acts or practices violate Section 5(a)(2) of CAN-SPAM, 15 U.S.C. 23 § 7704(a)(2). 24 CONSUMER INJURY 25 57. Consumers throughout the United States have been injured 26 as a result of Defendants' unlawful acts or practices. Absent 27 injunctive relief by this Court, Defendants are likely to continue 28 Complaint Page 15 of 18

to injure consumers and to harm the public interest.

THIS COURT'S POWER TO GRANT RELIEF

58. Section 13(b) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 53(b), empowers this Court to grant injunctive and other ancillary relief to prevent and remedy any violation of any provision of law enforced by the FTC.

59. Section 5(m)(1)(A) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45(m)(1)(A), as modified by Section 4 of the Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Act of 1990, 28 U.S.C. § 2461, as amended, and as implemented by 16 C.F.R. § 1.98(d) (2007), authorizes this Court to award monetary civil penalties of not more than \$11,000 for each violation of CAN-SPAM. Defendants ValueClick's and Hi-Speed Media's violations of CAN-SPAM were committed with the knowledge required by Section 5(m)(1)(A) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45(m)(1)(A).

60. This Court, in the exercise of its equitable jurisdiction, may award ancillary relief to remedy injury caused by Defendants' violations of CAN-SPAM and the FTC Act.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff requests that this Court, as authorized by Sections 5(a), 5(m)(1)(A), 13(b) and 19 of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. §§ 45(a), 45(m)(1)(A), 53(b), and 57b, and pursuant to its own equitable powers:

 Enter judgment against Defendants and in favor of Plaintiff for each violation alleged in this complaint;

2. Award Plaintiff monetary civil penalties from Defendants ValueClick and Hi-Speed Media for every violation of CAN-SPAM;

3. Award Plaintiff such relief as the Court finds necessary to redress injury to consumers resulting from Defendants'

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violations of Section 5(a) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45(a), including, but not limited to, rescission of contracts, restitution, the refund of monies paid, and the disgorgement of ill-gotten monies;

4. Enter a permanent injunction to prevent future violations of the FTC Act and CAN-SPAM by Defendants;

5. Order Defendants to pay the costs of this action; and6. Award Plaintiff such other and additional relief as theCourt may determine to be just and proper.

Complaint

	Dated:, 2008	Respectfully submitted,
1 2 3	OF COUNSEL: LOIS C. GREISMAN	FOR THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA JEFFREY S. BUCHOLTZ Acting Assistant Attorney General Civil Division U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
4	Associate Director for Marketing Practices FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION	THOMAS P. O'BRIEN United States Attorney
5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13	JOEL WINSTON Associate Director for Privacy and Identity Protection FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION Stephen L. Cohen Ethan Arenson Burke W. Kappler Attorneys Federal Trade Commission 600 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20580 PHONE: 202-326-3222; 326- 2204; 326-2043 FAX: 202-326-3395; 326-3768	LEE WEIDMAN Assistant United States Attorney Chief, Civil Division GARY PLESSMAN Assistant U.S. Attorney Chief, Civil Fraud Section California State Bar No. 101233 Room 7516, Federal Building 300 North Los Angeles Street Los Angeles, California, 90012 Telephone: (213) 894-2474 Facsimile: (213) 894-2380 Email: gary.plessman@usdoj.gov EUGENE M. THIROLF Director,
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