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For Immediate Release

May 6, 2010

CHARGES ANNOUNCED IN CASH SCHEME FOR DRIVER'S LICENSES

PHILADELPHIA - Charges were filed today against three individuals in a scheme to make cash payments to state driver's license examiners in exchange for the issuance of driver's licenses, announced United States Attorney Michael L. Levy. Joining Levy in the announcement were United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE") Special Agent-in-Charge John P. Kelleghan, Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Acting Special Agent-in-Charge Troy N. Steman, and United States Department of Transportation Office of Inspector General Special Agent-in-Charge Ned Schwartz.

Saman H. Salem, Harold Palmer, and Pierre E. Jean-Louis are charged in two informations and an indictment¹ with extortion and manufacturing identity documents without lawful authority. Salem is also charged with tax evasion, obstruction of justice, and illegally structuring cash transactions to avoid notice to federal regulators. Palmer is also charged with making false statements to federal agents.

According to the charging documents, Salem and Jean-Louis made cash payments to driver's license examiners and posed as interpreters who assisted applicants in cheating on driver's license examinations. Palmer, a Pennsylvania Department of Transportation ("PennDOT") driver's license examiner, took cash payments to issue driver's licenses. The charges are part of a two-year investigation led by the United States Attorney's Office and ICE into several illegal businesses that assisted illegal aliens, foreign nationals, and others in obtaining driver's licenses, through fraudulent means, at various PennDOT driver's license centers in Philadelphia.

"These defendants are charged with systematically corrupting the process of obtaining driving licenses and putting hundreds of identification documents into the hands of people not eligible to receive them," Levy said. "Fraudulently obtained identification documents do more than put unfit drivers on the road and endanger other drivers and pedestrians, they enable other crimes and prevent law enforcement's detection of those crimes."

"Public corruption by state employees selling authentic drivers' licenses to criminals significantly impacts the community's safety and security," Kelleghan said. "This case demonstrates both the seriousness of the threat and the effectiveness of ICE's Document and Benefit Fraud Task Force."

To date, the investigation has resulted in:

¹An indictment or information is an accusation. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

- The charging of a total of 20 individuals in various schemes to obtain driver's licenses and other identification documents for ineligible individuals, including illegal aliens, foreign nationals, and others.

- The charging of 10 individuals for operating a 17-year conspiracy to obtain driver's licenses and other fraudulent identification documents for illegal aliens and foreign nationals. This organization, headed by defendant Kakhyun H. Lee and headquartered in Northern New Jersey, obtained hundreds of false identities. Lee, a trained artist and Korean national, obtained Korean passports, forged United States visas into these passports, and transported hundreds of individuals to Tennessee, Georgia, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania to obtain fraudulent identification documents. These documents included driver's licenses and identification cards that included the picture of Lee's customer and the identifying information of another person Lee supplied. Lee charged his customers up to \$4,000 for fraudulent identity documents. Lee has pleaded guilty and is scheduled for sentencing on June 1, 2010.

- The charging of driving school operators Michel Lominy, Salem, and Alphonso Wilson who made cash payments to driver's license examiners to issue licenses to individuals who took perfunctory driving tests, or no test at all, and who assisted applicants in cheating on driving tests.

- The charging of Alexander Steele, Palmer, and Anita Levier, all PennDOT driver's license examiners who allegedly took thousands of dollars in cash payments to issue driver's licenses to individuals without regard for their eligibility to receive licenses.

- The seizure of more than \$300,000 in cash from Salem, which was part of the proceeds of the scheme and the uncovering of a more than five-year tax fraud scheme engineered by Salem.

“The indictments announced today identify individuals who corrupted governmental processes for their own financial gain, while disregarding the safety of their fellow Americans,” IRS's Steman said. “We will continue to apply the financial investigative expertise of IRS Criminal Investigation Special Agents to bring such individuals to justice, in conjunction with our partners at the United States Attorney's office and other law enforcement agencies.”

“Working with our law enforcement and prosecutorial colleagues, the Department of Transportation, Office of Inspector General is committed to investigating and seeking prosecution of those who choose to participate in the distribution of fraudulent driver's licenses,” DOT-OIG's Schwartz said. “In addition to a potential for identity theft and other criminal activity, people who fraudulently obtain a driver's license, commercial or otherwise, could pose a serious safety risk to the traveling public.”

If convicted, Salem faces a maximum sentence of 53 years in prison. Palmer faces a maximum sentence of 40 years imprisonment and Jean-Louis faces a maximum sentence of 35 years imprisonment.

The case was investigated by United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division, the United States Department of Transportation – Office of Inspector General, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Pennsylvania State Police. It is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Richard J. Zack and David J. Ignall.

INFORMATION REGARDING THE DEFENDANTS

NAME	ADDRESS	YEAR OF BIRTH
Saman H. Salem	Philadelphia, PA	1977
Kakhyun H. Lee	Ridgefield, NJ	1963
Alexander Steele	Philadelphia, PA	1963
Harold Palmer	Philadelphia, PA	1966
Anita Levier	Philadelphia, PA	1956
Michel Lominy	Irvington, NJ	1969
Pierre E. Jean-Louis	Collingdale, PA	1958
Mal S. Lee	North Wales, PA	1955
Alphonso Wilson	Philadelphia, PA	1962
Justin Kim	Palisades Park, NJ	1973
Ryan Koo	Closter, New Jersey	1970
Min S. Kim	Federal custody	1953
Marcelino Rodroquez-Garcia	New York, NY	1965
Carlos Tejeda-Mejia	In custody/Citizen of Dominican Republic	1979
Raul Villaneuva Figueora	Citizen of Dominican Republic	1965
Victor Rodriguez	Citizen of Dominican Republic	1968
Yerris R. Ramirez Nunez	Citizen of Dominican Republic	1977
Jovany Ramirez	Queens, NY	1980
Christopher J. Hahn	Edgewater, NJ	1962
Hyung J. Chang	Ridgefield, NJ	1975

NAME	STATUS/MAXIMUM PENALTY
Saman H. Salem	Charged/53 years in prison
Kakhyun H. Lee	Awaiting sentencing/163 years in prison
Alexander Steele	Awaiting trial/85 years in prison
Harold Palmer	Charged/40 years in prison
Anita Levier	Sentenced/three years probation

Michel Lominy	Awaiting sentencing/193 years in prison
Pierre E. Jean-Louis	Charged/35 years in prison
Mal S. Lee	Awaiting trial/34 years in prison
Alphonso Wilson	Awaiting sentencing/85 years in prison
Justin Kim	Awaiting trial/85 years in prison
Ryan Koo	Awaiting trial/119 years in prison
Min S. Kim	Sentenced/13 months in prison
Marcelino Rodriguez-Garcia	Sentenced/25 months in prison
Carlos Tejeda-Mejia	Sentenced/27 months in prison
Raul Villanueva Figueroa	Sentenced
Victor Rodriguez	Sentenced/12 months in prison
Yerris Radhames Ramirez Nunez	Sentenced/41 months in prison
Jovany Ramirez	Awaiting sentencing/15 years in prison
Christopher J. Hahn	Awaiting trial/17 years in prison
Hyung J. Chang	Awaiting sentencing/10 years in prison

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