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BUNCOME CO. MAN SENTENCED TO 30 MONTHS IN PRISON FOR IDENTITY THEFT AND AGGRAVATED IDENTITY THEFT

Two Other Defendants Have Also Been Sentenced in Connection with the Investigation

ASHEVILLE, N.C. – U.S. District Judge Martin Reidinger sentenced Salimon Ramos, 34, of Vera Cruz, Mexico today to serve 30 months in prison to be followed by three years of supervised release for identity theft related offenses, announced Anne M. Tompkins, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina.

U.S. Attorney Tompkins is joined in making today's announcement by Brock D. Nicholson, Special Agent in Charge of ICE Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in Atlanta and the Carolinas; Guy Fallen, Special Agent in Charge of the Social Security Administration, Office of the Inspector General (SSA-OIG), Atlanta Field Division; Commissioner Mike Robertson of the North Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles (NC DMV); Sheriff Charlie McDonald of the Henderson County Sheriff's Office; and Sheriff Van Duncan of the Buncombe County Sheriff's Office.

On March 15, 2011, a criminal bill of indictment charged Ramos and his co-conspirator, Angel Evilio Alvarado-Gonzalez, 32, of Honduras, with aggravated identity theft, production of false identification documents, and production of counterfeit Social Security cards. The indictment also charged the defendants with knowingly transferring, possessing and using without lawful authority another person's identification. A criminal bill of information charged a third defendant, Herbert Alexander Guevara-Alvarado, 32, of El Salvador, with production of false identification documents, production of counterfeit Social Security cards, and possession of a counterfeit Social Security card with intent to sell it.

According to court documents and court proceedings, the three defendants manufactured, possessed and sold counterfeit identification documents, purporting to be Social Security cards and permanent resident alien identification cards. Court documents indicate that the defendants obtained personal information from other individuals and used that information to produce and sell counterfeit identification documents for profit. During the course of the investigation, court documents indicate that the defendants attempted to sell stolen counterfeit identification documents to undercover officers conducting the investigation.

All three defendants pled guilty to the charges. Alvarado-Gonzalez was sentenced in February 2012 to 30 months in prison, to be followed by three years of supervised release. Guevara-Alvarado was sentenced in March 2012 to time served, having been in custody since February of 2011, as well as one year of supervised release. The Court further ordered that the defendants, who are undocumented aliens, be deported upon completion of their prison sentences.

“Counterfeit identification documents compromise the integrity of our nation’s legal immigration system,” said U.S. Attorney Tompkins. “Together with our federal, state and local partners we will continue to do whatever is necessary to safeguard the integrity of identification documents and go after those who operate in the fake document market.”

“Identify theft is a crime that has far reaching and long lasting negative consequences on its victims,” said Special Agent in Charge Nicholson. “Additionally, anyone who knowingly and indiscriminately sells fraudulent identity cards is putting the security of our communities and even our country at risk, as counterfeit documents can potentially be used by dangerous criminals and others who are attempting to obscure their identities and cover their tracks.”

Ramos will be transferred into the custody of the Federal Bureau of Prisons upon designation of a federal facility. Both Ramos and Alvarado-Gonzalez will serve their federal prison sentences without the possibility of parole.

The investigation of the case was handled by HSI, SSA-OIG, NC DMV’s Division of Motor Vehicles License and Theft Bureau, the Henderson County Sheriff’s Office and the Buncombe County Sheriff’s Office. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney David A. Thorneloe of U.S. Attorney’s Office in Asheville.

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