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**FEDERAL CHARGES ALLEGE CAPTORS HELD DISABLED ADULTS IN SUBHUMAN CONDITIONS TO CARRY OUT SOCIAL SECURITY FRAUD**

First Hate Crimes Case Of Its Kind In The Country Also Charges Murder

PHILADELPHIA - Linda Weston, her daughter and three co-defendants are charged in a 196-count indictment<sup>1</sup>, unsealed today, with racketeering conspiracy, murder in aid of racketeering, hate crimes, sex trafficking, kidnapping, forced human labor, theft, fraud, and other violent crimes. The indictment alleges that Weston and her associates carried out a racketeering enterprise that targeted mentally disabled victims and as part of a scheme to steal disability payments from the victims and the Social Security system. As part of the scheme, Weston persuaded each victim to make her the designated recipient of their Social Security disability payments in exchange for the promise of a comfortable place to live. Once appointed as the designated recipient of disability payments, Weston, aided by the co-defendants, subjected the victims to subhuman conditions of captivity. The defendants beat the victims, kept them captive in locked closets, basements and attics, deprived them of adequate food and medical care, and moved them between Philadelphia, Texas, Virginia, and Florida in order to further the scheme and evade law enforcement. According to the indictment, some of the victims endured this abuse for years, until October 15, 2011, when Philadelphia Police officers rescued them from the sub-basement of an apartment building in the city's Tacony section. The enterprise allegedly victimized six disabled adults and four children.

Today's indictment was announced by United States Attorney Zane David Memeger, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division Thomas E. Perez, FBI Acting Special Agent-in-Charge John Brosnan, Special Agent-in-Charge Michael McGill with the Social Security Administration's Office of Inspector General, and Philadelphia Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey.

Along with Weston and her daughter Jean McIntosh, the indictment charges Weston's paramour, Gregory Thomas, Sr., Eddie Wright, and Nicklaus Woodard. According to the indictment, the defendants used isolation, intimidation, threats of violence and violence to control the mentally disabled captives and each defendant had a role in the racketeering enterprise:

- Linda Weston was the leader and organizer of the enterprise that operated from at least as early as the Fall of 2001 through October of 2011. She enticed all of the mentally challenged adults into coming to live with the enterprise and controlled all aspects of their captivity.

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<sup>1</sup>An Indictment is an accusation. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

- Jean McIntosh was also a leader of the enterprise who acted as her mother's right hand woman. She assisted in confining, controlling, disciplining, housing, and transporting the mentally challenged captives.
- Gregory Thomas, Sr. assisted in obtaining, confining, controlling, housing, and transporting the mentally disabled captives. He installed locks on the doors and windows of every residence where the captives were kept to prevent them from escaping.
- Eddie Wright assisted in confining, controlling, housing, and transporting the mentally challenged captives.
- Nicklaus Woodard assisted in confining, controlling and disciplining the mentally challenged captives.

The conduct of each defendant is set forth in the overt act section of the indictment and generally describes criminal activity from the Fall of 2001 to October 15, 2011 when the Philadelphia Police rescued the victims from the sub-basement of the apartment building. The indictment charges that in confining the victims, the defendants practiced what is described as "abusive control and confinement techniques" in which the defendants:

- a. confined the disabled individuals to locked basements, rooms, closets, attics, and apartments;
- b. sedated the disabled individuals by putting drugs in the food and drink served to them by Weston and others, at Weston's direction;
- c. subdued the disabled victims by serving them a low calorie, high starch diet consisting exclusively of Ramen noodles, beans and stew and generally limited them to, at most, one meal a day;
- d. punished the disabled individuals by slapping, punching, kicking, stabbing, burning and hitting them with closed hands, belts, sticks, bats, and hammers or other objects, including the butt of a pistol, when the individuals tried to escape, stole food, or otherwise protested their confinement and treatment.

The indictment alleges that Weston's use of these techniques caused the deaths of two of the disabled victims. For example, in 2002, Weston met M.L. and lured her to come live with the family. M.L. was forced to cook, clean, do wash, and babysit without compensation. M.L. was beaten when she tried to escape or when she begged for food and was not provided with any medical attention for her injuries. When Weston moved the enterprise to Virginia in 2008, M.L. died of bacterial meningitis and starvation. Weston allegedly ordered other members of the household to move M.L.'s body to a bedroom and stage the scene before calling law enforcement and the next day

the family left for Philadelphia. In addition, in April 2005, Weston and Thomas allegedly targeted victim D.S. who they saw standing on a street corner. They brought D.S. to the WF home at 2211 Glenview Avenue in Philadelphia. D.S. was kept in the basement with the other victims, fed a substandard diet, and not allowed to use the bathroom. On June 26, 2005, D.S. was found dead in the basement. Weston allegedly ordered other members of the household to move D.S.'s body to a bedroom and stage an accidental overdose before calling law enforcement.

The indictment also alleges that Weston forced two female captives to engage in prostitution while the enterprise operated in Killeen, Texas and West Palm Beach, Florida.

The defendants are charged in four counts of violating the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act. The Shepard-Byrd Act criminalizes certain acts of physical violence causing bodily injury motivated by any person's actual or perceived race, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or disability.

"The physically and mentally disabled are among the most vulnerable in our society. They deserve to be treated with respect and compassion, not violence," said Memeger. "Linda Weston and others, in fact, decided to prey on these victims specifically because of their physical and mental challenges and they did so through violence, fear and intimidation for the purpose of stealing social security payments that were meant for the victims' long-term care. "Shocking" does not begin to describe the criminal allegations in this case where the victims were tied-up and confined like zoo animals and treated like property akin to slaves. Hopefully, today's announcement of a 196-count indictment will help begin the process of restoring the victims' faith in humanity."

"The allegations in this indictment describe a scheme to physically abuse and subjugate mentally disabled adults for purposes of de-humanizing them, stealing their money, and unlawfully obtaining their labor," said AAG Perez. "The laws against violently assaulting individuals because of their disabilities and those that prohibit human trafficking were designed to combat conduct aimed at vulnerable members of society, such as the alleged victims in this case. The Department of Justice, the Civil Rights Division, and our United States Attorney's Offices will vigorously enforce these laws."

"Today's Indictment represents just one more step towards closure and healing, not only for the victims of this heinous hate crime, but for the community as a whole," said Special Agent-in-Charge John Brosnan. "The FBI, along with the United States Attorney's Office, the Philadelphia Police Department and the Social Security Administration Office of Inspector General remain committed to protecting each and every citizen's civil rights, and will aggressively investigate any violation of those rights, bringing the perpetrators to justice."

"The Office of the Inspector General investigates many cases involving the misuse of Social Security benefits by representative payees, but thankfully, we've never seen a case involving this level of cruelty and inhumanity to our most vulnerable beneficiaries," said Special Agent-in-Charge

Michael McGill. "We're pleased to see justice served, and grateful to the U.S. Attorney and our investigative partners for their unflagging support in this investigation."

If convicted of all charges, each of the defendants faces a statutory maximum sentence of life in prison with advisory guideline sentencing ranges that involve substantial terms of imprisonment. Weston potentially faces the death penalty and also faces mandatory restitution of approximately \$212,000 and special assessments.

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Social Security Administration Office of Inspector General, the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation, the Philadelphia Police Department, with assistance from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, West Palm Beach Field Office. It is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Richard P. Barrett, Faithe Moore Taylor, and Department of Justice Civil Rights Division Trial Attorney Betsy Biffl. The case was originally charged by the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office.

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INFORMATION REGARDING THE DEFENDANTS

| NAME                | ADDRESS             | AGE | STATUTORY MAXIMUM |
|---------------------|---------------------|-----|-------------------|
| Linda Weston        |                     | 52  | LIFE              |
| Jean McIntosh       | Philadelphia        | 33  | LIFE              |
| Gregory Thomas, Sr. | Philadelphia        | 49  | LIFE              |
| Eddie Wright        | Killeen, Texas      | 52  | LIFE              |
| Nicklaus Woodard    | West Palm Beach, FL | 26  | LIFE              |

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### DEFENDANT/CHARGES CHART

| DEF.<br>NAME           | 18 USC 1962(d)<br>Conspiracy to<br>participate in a<br>racketeering<br>enterprise<br>1 ct | 18 USC 371<br>Conspiracy<br>1 count | 18 USC<br>249(a)(2)<br>Hate crime<br>4 counts | 18 USC<br>1201<br>Kidnapping<br>9 counts | 18 USC 1959 (a)(1) -<br>Violent crime in aid of<br>racketeering (kidnapping)<br>7 counts | 18 USC 1959 (a)<br>(3) Violent crime in aid of<br>racketeering<br>(conspiracy to assault with<br>dangerous weapon<br>6 counts | 18 U.S.C.<br>1584(a)<br>Involuntary<br>servitude<br>1 count | 18 USC 1959 (a)<br>(1) murder in aid<br>of racketeering<br>2 counts |
|------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|---|--|--|---|---|---|
| LINDA<br>WESTON        | 1   | 2                                   | 3, 4, 5, 6                                    | 7, 8, 9, 16,<br>17, 21,<br>28, 33, 196   | 10, 11, 18, 19, 22, 30, 34   | 12, 13, 20, 23, 29, 35  | 14  | 15, 24  |
| JEAN<br>MCINTOSH       | 1   | 2                                   | 3, 4, 5, 6                                    | 7, 8, 9, 16,<br>17, 21, 28,<br>33, 196   | 10, 11, 18, 19, 22, 30, 34   | 12, 13, 20, 35  | 14  |   |
| GREGORY<br>THOMAS, SR. | 1   | 2                                   | 3, 4, 5, 6                                    | 7, 8, 9, 16,<br>17, 21, 28,<br>33        | 10, 11, 18, 19, 22, 30, 34   | 12, 13, 20, 23, 35  | 14  |   |
| EDDIE WRIGHT           | 1   | 2                                   | 3, 4, 5, 6                                    | 7, 8, 17, 21,<br>28, 33                  | 10, 19, 22, 30, 34   | 12, 20, 23, 35  |   |   |
| NICKLAUS R.<br>WOODARD | 1   | 2                                   | 3, 4, 5, 6                                    | 7, 8, 17, 21,<br>28, 33                  | 10, 22, 30, 34   | 12, 20, 23, 29, 35  |   |   |

| DEF.<br>NAME              | 18 USC 1001<br>false<br>statements<br>5 counts | 42 USC 1383 (a)<br>(2) false<br>statements to SSA<br>4 counts | 18 USC 1343<br>wire fraud<br>125 counts | 18 USC 1341<br>mail fraud<br>18 counts | 18 USC 1591, 1594<br>sex trafficking<br>2 counts | 18 U.S.C 1589 (a)<br>(1) forced human<br>labor 1 count | 18 USC 924©<br>(3) use of a firearm in<br>furtherance of a violent<br>crime 4 counts | 18 USC 641<br>theft from gov't<br>6 counts |
|---------------------------|--|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| LINDA<br>WESTON           | 44, 45, 46,<br>47, 195                         | 48, 49, 50, 51  | 52<br>THROUGH<br>176                    | 177<br>THROUGH<br>194                  | 25, 26   | 27   | 31, 32, 36, 37   | 38, 39, 40, 41, 42,<br>43                  |
| JEAN<br>MCINTOSH          |  |   | 52<br>THROUGH<br>176                    | 177<br>THROUGH<br>194                  |  | 27   |  | 43   |
| GREGORY<br>THOMAS,<br>Sr. |  |   |   |  |  | 27   |  |  |
| EDDIE<br>WRIGHT           |  |   |   |  |  | 27   |  |  |
| NICKLAUS<br>R.<br>WOODARD |  |   |   |  |  | 27   | 31, 32, 36, 37   |  |