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FOURTEEN CONVICTED ON CHARGES OF INTERNET TRAFFICKING IN CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES AS WELL AS MONEY LAUNDERING

Orlando, FL - A jury in U.S. District Court yesterday found Jude LaCour (age 36, of Daytona Beach) guilty of fifty-two counts of money laundering and various drug-trafficking offenses involving the sale of controlled substances over the Internet. For each count of money laundering, LaCour faces a term of ten to twenty years in federal prison.

The jury also found co-defendants Dr. Christopher Tobin (age 42, of Wilmington, North Carolina), Dr. Akhil Baranwal (age 35, of Pennsylvania), Dr. James Pickens (age 73, of Midvale, Utah), and Geunnet Chebssi (Pharmacist, age 57, of Spencerville, Maryland) guilty of drug-trafficking offenses involving the sale of controlled substances over the Internet. LaCour, Tobin, Baranwal, Pickens, and Chebssi each face (for each count) a term of three to five years in federal prison.

Previously, Jeffery LaCour (age 61, of South Daytona, and father of Jude LaCour), Hudson Smith (age 37, of Deland), Dr. Alexis Roman Torres (age 55, of Puerto Rico), Dr. Andrew DeSonia (age 48, of Indiana), Dr. Margaret Fulmore (a/k/a Margaret McIntosh, age 53, of Charlotte, North Carolina), and Dr. Abel Lau (age 37, of Tulsa, Oklahoma) had pleaded guilty to drug-trafficking offenses related to this case. Each faces a term of three to five years in federal prison.

In addition, three other defendants who previously had pleaded guilty to related drug-trafficking offenses have already been sentenced: Pharmacist Raymond Rapkin (37

months in federal prison), Dr. Michael Millette (41 months in federal prison), and Dr. Thomas Hanny (33 months in federal prison).

At trial, the United States presented evidence that the defendants conspired to distribute and distributed controlled substances and other prescription drugs across the United States to customers who did not have valid prescriptions. Jude LaCour owned and operated Jive Network, Inc., an organization that used the Internet to distribute and dispense prescription drugs to customers unlawfully. Jeffrey LaCour served as the Director of Operations at Jive Network, and Hudson Smith was the Director of Pharmacy/Physician operations. Jive Network sold controlled substances, mostly stimulants and depressants, using internet websites and customer service representatives who were located at its office in Daytona Beach, Florida. Customers, who had no prescriptions, accessed the websites and purchased the controlled substances with a credit card or by money order. The customers also completed a short health history questionnaire. Jive Network did not verify the customers' identities and did not require the customers to submit any medical records during the ordering process.

The LaCours and Smith recruited doctors located across the United States, including Tobin, Baranwal, Roman Torres, DeSonia, Fulmore, Lau, Pickens, Millette, and Hanny, to review health questionnaire answers and approve customer orders for the controlled substances solely on the basis of the answers. The doctors had no face-to-face contact with the customers, did not verify their identities or ages, did not conduct any physical examinations or testing, did not review any medical records before approving drug orders, and often were not licensed in the states in which the customers resided. Indeed, as proven at trial, Jive Network doctors approved and issued drug orders not to diagnose and treat medical conditions but to facilitate the distribution of drugs that Jive Network customers pre-selected and to profit from that distribution. Jive Network paid the doctors

a fee for each questionnaire they reviewed. Jive Network doctors unlawfully approved and issued “prescription” drug orders outside the usual course of their professional practice and for no legitimate medical purpose. The “prescriptions” they issued for Jive Network customers were invalid.

The LaCours and Smith also recruited pharmacists, including Chebssi and Rapkin, to dispense and ship the drugs throughout the United States via Federal Express. The Jive Network pharmacists and their pharmacies often were not licensed in the states to which they shipped drugs. They did not contact the Jive Network customers, and they rarely contacted the Jive Network doctors who approved the “prescription” drug orders.

During the three-year conspiracy, the organization distributed approximately 4.8 million dosage units of Schedule III controlled substances and approximately 39.2 million dosage units of Schedule IV controlled substances to Internet customers who had no valid prescriptions. Jive Network received well over 500,000 customer orders for controlled substances and illegally generated revenue in excess of \$77 million.

The United States also proved at trial that Jude LaCour and Jeffrey LaCour agreed to launder the proceeds of the illegal drug conspiracy with the intent to promote and carry on the conspiracy. They transferred millions of dollars via wire transfer and check to their personal brokerage or bank accounts.

This case was jointly investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Internal Revenue Service, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Karen L. Gable and Daniel C. Irick.