

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Sept. 17, 2009

Identity Theft Ringleader Pleads Guilty to Absconding After More Than Four Years on the Lam

– New Sentence to Run Consecutive to Original 55-Month Sentence –

(More)

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NEWARK – The mastermind of an identity theft ring who fled after being sentenced for his role in the scheme to steal personal and confidential credit report profiles of thousands of customers of Weichert Financial Services, Inc. pleaded guilty today to failure to surrender to federal prison, Acting U.S. Attorney Ralph J. Marra, Jr., announced.

Ronald Hyppolite, 31, a Haitian citizen and permanent U.S. resident formerly of Irvington, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Dennis M. Cavanaugh to an Information which charged him with failure to surrender to prison to serve his sentence.

In January 2005, Judge Harold A. Ackerman sentenced Hyppolite and four others for their roles in the fraud conspiracy. Judge Ackerman sentenced Hyppolite then to 55 months in federal prison, and allowed him to voluntarily surrender to a prison designated by the Federal Bureau of Prisons. The other defendants received sentences ranging from probation to 33 months in prison for their respective roles in the conspiracy.

Days after the sentence was imposed, Hyppolite fled to Florida and used an alias to avoid apprehension by law enforcement, according to Robert Kirsch, the Assistant U.S. Attorney who handled both the prosecutions.

Hyppolite was arrested on July 10, 2009, in Delray Beach by Special Agents of the FBI and members of the FBI's Safe Streets Task Force, consisting of local and state law enforcement officers, on an arrest warrant issued by Judge Ackerman relating to his absconding.

The charge of failure to surrender to prison carries a maximum term of five years imprisonment. The sentence imposed by Judge Cavanaugh will run consecutive to the 55-month prison term imposed for the identity thefts. Hyppolite remains in custody pending sentencing on Jan. 11 for the absconding charge.

The identity theft fraud scheme began with Hyppolite's then live-in girlfriend, Marie Louissaint, who was employed by Weichert Financial of Morris Plains, an affiliate of Weichert Realtors, Inc., as an administrative assistant. At Hyppolite's instruction, Louissaint stole hard copies of Weichert's customer credit reports, which Hyppolite and the others then used to hack into Weichert's internal computer system by using the coded information contained on the stolen hard copies of the credit reports. The defendants then gained access to the confidential financial information of thousands of Weichert customers.

According to the initial criminal Information which charged Hyppolite with conspiracy, from November 2002 through April 2003, Hyppolite and four others stole confidential credit reports of approximately 3,774 customers of Weichert Financial. The stolen credit reports were then sold to others for cash, given away to others, or used by the conspirators to open fraudulent credit reports to purchase merchandise. Hyppolite pleaded guilty on Oct. 15, 2004, and admitted that he and the others obtained between \$120,000 and \$200,000 of merchandise through the fraud scheme, which they had delivered to various third-party addresses in Irvington, Union, Hillside, East Orange, as well as locations in Brooklyn and Allentown, Pa. in order to avoid detection.

At the time, Weichert Financial employed approximately 600 people, and was licensed to do business in more than 40 states. Weichert Financial was in the mortgage brokerage business, and was affiliated with Weichert Realtors. Weichert had cooperated fully with the investigation.

Marra credited Special Agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun in Newark; and Special Agents of the United States Secret Service, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Cynthia R. Wofford, in Morristown, for their assistance with regard to both the fugitive investigation, and the underlying fraud cases.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Robert Kirsch, of the Securities and Health Care Fraud Unit, in Newark.

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Defense Counsel: Gerald Saluti, Esq. of Newark.