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PRESS RELEASE

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PENNSYLVANIA MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO
THEFT OF GOVERNMENT FUNDS

This morning, **Kenneth Lopez**, 47, a resident of Redding, Pennsylvania who previously resided in Rio Rancho, New Mexico, pleaded guilty to theft of government funds before United States Magistrate Judge Lorenzo F. Garcia under a plea agreement with the United States Attorney's Office. Lopez entered his guilty plea to Count 4 of a five-count indictment charging Lopez and his wife, Nancy Lopez, 46, with theft of government funds. Specifically, Lopez admitted that he stole \$12,936.00 in Social Security benefits that were intended for his deceased grandfather. At sentencing, which has yet to be scheduled, Lopez faces a maximum ten-year term of imprisonment, a maximum \$250,000 fine, and restitution as ordered by the Court.

United States Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales said that the indictment charges Lopez and his wife with stealing approximately \$74,946.00 in Social Security benefits between March 2003 and April 2009. In his plea agreement, Lopez admitted that his grandfather, his wife and he were joint account holders of a bank account at the Kirtland Federal Credit Union (KFCU), and that his grandfather's Social Security benefits were deposited into the jointly held KFCU account on a monthly basis. Lopez further admitted that,

although his grandfather passed away in February 2003, Social Security benefits continued to be deposited into the jointly held KFCU account from March 2003 through April 2009. Instead of notifying the Social Security Administration of the grandfather's death, Lopez and his wife unlawfully converted the funds, approximately \$74,946.00, for their own use. Approximately \$48,268.00 of the loss amount occurred within the statute of limitations.

Nancy Lopez entered a not guilty plea when she was arraigned in July 2010. Because charges in indictments are only accusations, she is presumed innocent unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

The case was investigated by the Office of the Inspector General, Office of Investigations, Social Security Administration and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Paul H. Spiers.

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