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ARMY SERGEANT SENTENCED FOR STEALING GOVERNMENT PROPERTY, RESELLING IT ONLINE

Hairston Helped Sell Sensitive, Export-Controlled Devices to Private Individual Located in China

ATLANTA, GA - RAYMOND HAIRSTON, 46, of Decatur, Georgia, was sentenced to prison today by Senior District Judge J. Owen Forrester for stealing thousands of dollars of Army property and reselling it on the internet sales site eBay.

United States Attorney Sally Quillian Yates said of the case, "Propelled by greed, this defendant exposed controlled military technology to unknown individuals in foreign countries. Fortunately, acting on a tip from a manufacturer, the Army and the FBI disrupted the defendant's scheme before he and his partner managed to acquire and export additional sensitive items. At a time when their fellow soldiers are risking their lives in Afghanistan, it is disturbing that these men would steal from the Army to make a quick dollar."

HAIRSTON was sentenced to serve one year, three months in federal prison, to be followed by three years of supervised release. HAIRSTON will also be required to pay restitution of approximately \$75,000 to the United States Army for everything he sold online. HAIRSTON was also ordered to perform 60 hours of community service.

According to United States Attorney Yates, the charges and other information presented in court: In the summer of 2008, HAIRSTON and another sergeant based at the United States Army's Fort McPherson near Atlanta learned of an off-base property depot where "frustrated mail" was kept. "Frustrated mail" is defined as letters, packages, and other shipments sent through military channels that ultimately proves undeliverable. This includes certain shipments of equipment – such as the typically standard military kit, including boots, belts, vests, canteens, etc. If the shipments are not claimed within a year, the property is supposed to be reclaimed by the Army so that it can be re-used or recycled.

HAIRSTON and his partner, seeing a profit opportunity, began diverting these items from the depot and selling them on eBay, splitting the proceeds 50-50. Most of what they sold consisted of this same

military kit, and most buyers were apparent military enthusiasts here in the United States. Towards the end of 2008, the pair was able to acquire three full sets and one partial set of sensitive thermal imaging equipment at the depot. These thermal imaging systems are used with certain military assault weapons and are designed to enable soldiers to engage targets in total darkness (as opposed to regular night-vision devices, which require some light source, no matter how faint). After determining what the items were, the pair nonetheless marketed them on eBay, ultimately selling the three complete sets to different buyers in Italy, Japan, and China, netting them thousands of dollars.

The case broke when the manufacturer of the thermal imaging systems noticed one of its kits for sale on eBay. Aware that its product contained controlled technology that could not legally be sold on the open market, the manufacturer contacted the Army. The Army in turn worked with the FBI to identify the users of the suspect eBay accounts, which investigators found to be HAIRSTON and his fellow sergeant. When confronted with these facts, both HAIRSTON and his co-worker admitted their involvement in the theft and export scheme.

HAIRSTON's fellow sergeant, Erick Rodriguez, 27, of College Park, Georgia, was prosecuted through the military system, court-martialed and is currently serving a 1 year, 3 month prison sentence in military custody.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Criminal Investigative Division of the United States Army.

Assistant United States Attorney Robert McBurney prosecuted the case.

For further information please contact Sally Q. Yates, United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at 404-581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan.