



U.S. Department of Justice

United States Attorney

Eastern District of Pennsylvania

*615 Chestnut Street
Suite 1250
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106-4476
(215) 861-8200*

November 28, 2011

IDENTITY THEFT RINGLEADER SENTENCED

Man who was wooing bank employees for account information gets 15 ½ years

PHILADELPHIA - Miguel Bell, 36, of Philadelphia, convicted last June of running an identity theft ring that involved 24 other people, was sentenced today to 186 months in prison. Bell and his co-defendants attempted to steal more than \$2 million from the bank accounts of their victims, between September 1, 2005 and October 2009, using the victims' names, dates of births, addresses, social security numbers, and bank account numbers which Bell obtained from tellers at the customers' banks. To achieve his goal of securing the personally identifying information, in some cases Bell initiated a romantic relationship with the information holders, who included bank workers and an insurance company employee.

Bell was convicted of conspiracy to commit bank fraud, bank fraud, and aggravated identity theft. In addition to the prison term, which includes a two year mandatory minimum, U.S. District Court Judge Gene E.K. Pratter ordered Bell to pay restitution in the amount of \$1.7 million and a special assessment of \$4,800.

Bell verified balances in the targeted accounts by calling the banks' automated services line and accessing the account information. He then arranged for phony driver's licenses to be made for "check runners" that he recruited. Once the check runners cashed the fraudulent checks, Bell would collect the proceeds and pay the check runners.

Ten bank employees, a car dealership employee, an insurance company employee, eight check runners, and several recruiters were also charged in the scheme and pleaded guilty.

The case was investigated by the United States Postal Inspection Service and the United States Secret Service. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney K.T. Newton.

This case is part of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Identity Crimes Task Force, a multi-agency cooperative effort involving federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies pooling their knowledge and resources to crackdown on identity theft.

**UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
EASTERN DISTRICT, PENNSYLVANIA
Suite 1250, 615 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106**

**Contact: PATTY HARTMAN
Media Contact
215-861-8525**