

## U.S. ATTORNEY'S QUARTERLY

### Stealing the Identities of Foster Children



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Two separate and unrelated indictments allege a similar scheme involving the stolen identifying information of foster children. Seven people were charged in the two schemes.

Momolu Sirleaf, 34, of Darby, PA, is charged with with six counts of aiding or assisting in the preparation of false federal income tax returns, six counts of wire fraud, and eight counts of aggravated identity theft. The indictment alleges that, between January 2010 and February 2012, Sirleaf, who was the owner and operator of I.E.S. Tax Services in Darby, Pennsylvania, obtained the names and Social Security numbers of children within the foster care system to falsely use as dependents on his clients' income tax returns. According to the indictment, Sirleaf charged clients an extra fee for the use of each dependent's identity, or withheld an additional fee from the client's refund amount to pay for the false dependent. It is further alleged that by adding the false dependents, the de-

fendant generated false tax refunds for his clients, some in excess of \$8,000.

A separate indictment charged six people, including a one-time social worker, with stealing the identifying information of disabled children and foster children, also for the purpose of filing false tax returns. Then-social worker Gebah Kamara, 46, of Sharon Hill, PA, was a social worker at Catholic Social Services when he allegedly sold the defendant tax preparers the names and Social Security numbers of foster children for the purpose of creating fraudulent dependents on client tax returns. By including the false dependents, the tax preparers falsely claimed a number of credits and exemptions for their clients, which generated large fraudulent refunds, some in excess of \$9,000.

Charged with Kamara are: Ahmed Kamara, 38, and Ibrahim Kamara, 48, both of Yeadon, PA, Musa Turay, 41, and Foday Mansaray, 38, both of Darby, PA, and

Dauda Koroma, 43, of Philadelphia, PA. They are charged with conspiracy, aiding and assisting in the preparation of false tax returns, wire fraud, aggravated identity theft, and filing false individual income tax returns. The tax preparers - Ahmed Kamara, Musa Turay, Ibrahim Kamara, Dauda Koroma, and Foday Mansaray - worked at Medmans Financial Services in South West Philadelphia. By including the false dependents, the tax preparers falsely claimed a number of credits and exemptions for their clients, which generated large fraudulent refunds, some in excess of \$9,000. The tax preparer defendants charged clients up to \$800 to fraudulently add a dependent on their income tax return.

All of the defendants are awaiting trial and face substantial prison terms if convicted, as well as restitution to the IRS and possible fines.

## Ambulance Fraud Schemes

Between April and June of 2014, a number of individuals were sentenced for or charged with defrauding Medicare through the use of ambulance services that were not warranted.

Valeriy Davydchik was sentenced April 3rd to 24 months in prison for his role in a scheme involving Penn Choice Ambulance Inc., located in Camp Hill, PA and Huntingdon Valley, PA. Penn Choice caused Medicare to pay more than \$1.5 million based on fraudulent claims. Davydchik was an ambulance driver. Co-defendant Khusen Akhmedov, an EMT, was sentenced June 5th to 27 months for his role in the scheme. Co-defendant Mikhail Vasserman was sentenced June 26th to five years in prison. All were ordered to collectively pay restitution in the amount of \$1,703,450.74.

Vadim Fleshler, founder of Superior EMS Ambulance, was sentenced June 25th to 13 1/2 years in prison and was ordered to pay restitution to Medicare in the amount of \$1,931,015.52. His company transported patients who were able to walk and could travel safely by means other than ambulance and who, therefore, were not eligible for ambulance transportation under Medicare requirements.

An indictment was unsealed June 26th charging Life Support Corporation, its owners - Nazariy Kmet and Bogdan Kmet - and a company manager, Rostislav Kmet, with making false statements in connection with health care matters and money laundering. The defendants were also allegedly involved in paying kickbacks to patients so that the patients chose to be transported by Life Support ambulances. As a result of the billing, the Medicare program paid more than \$1.9 million for this allegedly inappropriate method of transportation. The defendant are awaiting trial.

All of the cases were investigated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Inspector General and the FBI.

## Social Security Fraud

Four individuals were charged with or sentenced for separate schemes to defraud the Social Security Administration.

Geraldine Jones was charged May 30th with receiving retirement and pension benefits from the Social Security Administration and the Department of Veterans Affairs that were intended for another individual. The alleged actions resulted in a loss to the government of \$155,798.

John Bernhardt was charged June 3rd with receiving and converting to his own use disability insurance benefits intended for another, between June 2010 and October 2012. The alleged scheme resulted in total losses to the government of \$27,191.

William E. Gardner was charged June 6th with receiving and converting to his own use survivor's insurance benefits intended for a family member for a period of almost nine years after the family member's death, resulting in total losses to the government of approximately \$104,615.

Ronnie Lee Johnson was sentenced June 10th to 16 months in prison for stealing and using the Social Security number and date of birth of another person. Johnson used the information to open bank accounts, obtain employment and driver's licenses in different states and obtain two passports.

## CIVIL SETTLEMENTS

In April, Thomas Jefferson University and Jefferson University Physicians, Department of Emergency Medicine agreed to a \$77,486 settlement to resolve allegations arising from overbilling for services. The settlement is the result of a voluntary self-disclosure after Thomas Jefferson University's Counsel for Compliance identified certain Medicare Part B professional fee billing anomalies during a routine internal compliance review. Based upon this review, it appeared that certain professional fee services were billed under an incorrect category, causing the government to overpay.

Pharmaceutical company Astellas Pharma US, Inc., agreed to pay \$7.3 million to resolve allegations that it violated the False Claims Act. The settlement resolves allegations that, between 2005 and 2010, Astellas knowingly marketed and promoted the sale of the drug Mycamine for pediatric use, which, at the time, was not a medically accepted indication and, therefore, not covered by federal health care programs.

Amedisys Inc. and its affiliates agreed to pay \$150 million to the federal government to resolve allegations that they violated the False Claims Act by submitting false home healthcare billings to the Medicare program. Amedisys, a Louisiana-based for-profit company, is one of the nation's largest providers of home health services and operates in 37 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Between 2008 and 2010, Amedisys allegedly billed Medicare for nursing and therapy services that were medically unnecessary or provided to patients who were not homebound, and otherwise misrepresented patients' conditions to increase its Medicare payments. These billing violations were the alleged result of management pressure on nurses and therapists to provide care based on the financial benefits to Amedisys, rather than the needs of patients.

In May, the United States filed a complaint against Home Care Hospice, Inc. (HCH), and its owners and operators, alleging that HCH violated the False Claims Act by falsely claiming and receiving millions of taxpayer dollars intended for dying Medicare recipients in need of hospice care. The government's complaint alleges that HCH, Alex Pugman, Svetlana Ganetsky, Matthew Kolodesh knowingly submitted false claims and records (including fabricated records) to Medicare for purported hospice care for patients who were not terminally ill and thus not eligible for the Medicare hospice benefit. The government further alleges that these defendants knowingly submitted or caused the submission of false claims and records (including fabricated records) to Medicare for crisis care services that were not necessary or not actually provided. The government further alleges that they and HCH Chief Executive Officer Malvina Yakobashvili unjustly enriched themselves at the expense of the United States.



## MEET THE “FEDS”: National Park Service

Summer is a busy time of year for the National Park Service (NPS) when hundreds of thousands of tourists converge on our national parks. Patrick Suddath is the Chief Ranger in Philadelphia, responsible for Visitor and Resource Protection at Independence National Historical Park (NHP), Edgar Allan Poe National Historic Site (NHS), Thaddeus Kosciuszko National Memorial (NM) and Gloria Dei NHS.

-What is NPS's mission?

Broadly speaking, it is to “conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects...by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of this and future generations.” (NPS Organic Act). Specifically at Independence National Historical Park, we are charged with preserving, protecting and interpreting the park's resources significantly associated with the founding and growth of the United States of America.

-What types of crimes or civil remedies does NPS pursue that the general public might not know?

The National Park Service is responsible for resource protection and public safety in a wide variety of locations; from vast natural areas like Yellowstone or Death Valley, to small historic sites like Hopewell Furnace or our own Thaddeus Kosciuszko National Memorial. As such, Congress has granted Law enforcement Rangers with the National Park Service very wide law enforcement authorities. Park Rangers exercise the full range of law enforcement authorities that would commonly be exercised by State or local law enforcement agencies. In areas like Independence NHP, the NPS shares jurisdiction concurrently with the State and the City of Philadelphia. This means that crimes that occur in the park may be prosecuted either federally or through the City of Philadelphia, depending on the nature of the offense.



-How did you decide to join NPS?

Growing up in New Mexico, I always felt a connection with nature and a fascination with history and culture. The mission of the National Park Service was a natural draw for me. Some of my fondest memories were visiting national parks as a child. It was a natural progression to join the NPS when I finished college.

-What do you like best about your job?

I am honored to work with some of the most dedicated and caring people I have ever met. I don't think there is a single person on my staff or in the park that does not appreciate the importance of our responsibility for caring for some of the most significant symbols of freedom and liberty in existence, and protecting and serving the people that come here to experience them.

-What do you think is the most important function of the NPS?

When Congress or the President designates an area as a National Park or Monument, they give it the highest level of protection that can be afforded in the United States. It is recognition that a site has irreplaceable value to society and acknowledges the need for that significance to pass through the generations. Ensuring that an area can be appreciated and understood by visitors today, while also protecting it for future generations is a daunting task. I am honored to be part of the team of dedicated and committed people that daily accomplish our mission.

## OUTREACH

The U.S. Attorney's Office partnered with Villanova University, Temple University, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Office of National Drug Control Policy, the Clery Center and HIDTA (High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area), in June, to sponsor a conference designed to encourage resource sharing, prevention tactics, and ideas for addressing the issue of prescription drug abuse. Representatives from area colleges, the pharmaceutical community, and law enforcement were in attendance. The Office of National Drug Control Policy defines prescription drug abuse as the non-medical and intentional abuse of prescription drugs, such as pain relievers, tranquilizers, stimulants, and sedatives, to get high. According to the Centers for Disease Control, since 2003, more overdose deaths have involved opioid analgesics than heroin and cocaine combined and 76% of nonmedical prescription drug users acquired drugs that had been prescribed to someone else. The conference engaged participants in roundtable discussions with experts on the topic of non-medical prescription drug use. A keynote address was delivered by Dr. Amelia Arria, an Associate Professor in the Department of Behavioral and Community Health and the Director of the Center on Young Adult Health and Development at the University of Maryland School of Public Health. Since 2003, Dr. Arria has been the Principal Investigator on a prospective study of health-risk behaviors of a large sample of college students who have been studied for eight years. Her research has focused on understanding the risk and resiliency factors associated with adolescent and young adult drinking, illicit and nonmedical prescription drug use. The majority of college students are not using prescription medications without a doctor's order. However, over the last decade, nonmedical prescription drug use is trending upward and surpassing other illicit drug use. Additional information is available at: <http://www.cyahd.umd.edu/>



## CRIME & PUNISHMENT:



### **CHARGED:**

#### **April 2014:**

Dominic Verdi, a former deputy commissioner of the Philadelphia Dept. of Licenses and Inspections, was charged with conspiracy, extortion, and honest services fraud. The indictment alleges that Verdi used his official position to coerce city bar and restaurant owners to purchase beer from Chappy's, in which he had a financial interest, in exchange for favorable treatment from L&I.

#### **May 2014:**

Jucontee Thomas Woewiyu, a/k/a "Jucontee Thomas Smith," was charged with lying on his application for U.S. citizenship by not disclosing his alleged affiliation with a violent political group in Liberia. Woewiyu is charged with perjury, fraudulently attempting to obtain citizenship, fraud in immigration documents, and false statements.

#### **June 2014:**

Kia Arthur was charged by Information with theft of government funds for applying for and receiving Federal Emergency Management Agency ("FEMA") benefits to which she was not entitled. Arthur claimed that she had been displaced from her home as a result of Hurricane Irene. The information alleges that her claims were false and that her actions resulted in a loss to the government of approximately \$18,413.

### **CONVICTED:**

#### **April 2014:**

A federal jury found Jay Stout and his company, Flying Tigers, Inc., guilty of conspiracy, fraud involving aircraft parts, mail fraud, and obstruction of justice. Stout was president of the former airplane mechanical repair business when he conspired with his son and others to

charge customers for annual inspections of their aircraft, despite the absence of a certified mechanic with inspection authority.

Rahim McIntyre was found guilty by a federal jury in a sex trafficking case. McIntyre, a/k/a "King Kobra," caused Internet advertisements to be created in which he advertised various females as available for purchase for purposes of prostitution. The advertisements featured pictures of the females, scantily clad, a description of each female, and a phone number to call to arrange a meeting with a female employed by McIntyre as a prostitute. McIntyre was convicted of using force and coercion to cause the women to engage in prostitution.

#### **May 2014:**

James Enowitch pleaded guilty to fraud in connection with the operation of a number of fraudulent diploma mills. Between 2003 and 2012, Enowitch sold \$5 million worth of fake degrees throughout the world. He profited more than \$700,000 from this fraudulent scheme.

Christopher Saridakis pleaded guilty to securities fraud for giving another person confidential information about a company's stock. Saridakis was a senior executive at GSI Commerce, Inc. ("GSIC"), when he provided non-public information regarding eBay's pending acquisition of GSIC. As a result, the person with whom Saridakis shared the privileged information made an illicit profit of \$260,304.

#### **June 2014:**

Marcus Akiem Ricketts pleaded guilty to four armed bank robberies and gun charges. In addition to robbing those banks, Ricketts admitted to seven others, six of which were pending investigation. The banks were located in Bucks, Berks, Ches-

ter, Delaware, Lehigh, and Montgomery counties.

### **SENTENCED:**

#### **April 2014:**

Kareem McBride was sentenced to 15 years in prison for robbery and gun charges. McBride pleaded guilty in May of 2013 to robbery and gun charges. McBride robbed the Wyalusing Food Market, at 54th and Wyalusing, brandishing a loaded black revolver that he pointed directly at one of the store owners. The other owner, who had been in the back of the store, shot McBride then detained him until the police arrived.

Baldwin Centeno was sentenced to 57 months in prison for randomly beating a man, near Philadelphia's Independence Hall, who was merely asking for assistance. On June 15, 2012, the victim approached Centeno and Centeno's uncle, Santos, on 4th Street at National Independence Park. The victim's car was missing and he was asking for help when the Centenos began beating him for no reason. The victim suffered traumatic brain injuries, facial fractures, and other serious injuries for which he required hospitalization. Santos Centeno was sentenced to 15 years.

#### **May 2014:**

Hakim King was sentenced to 41 1/2 years in prison for his role in two armed robberies of convenience stores. King and his co-defendant, Rezekiel Harris, robbed a Wawa in Radnor and a Sunoco A-Plus store in Bala Cynwyd in February of 2012. In one of the robberies, a victim was hit by debris when the defendants fired a gun into the concrete floor. King was convicted at trial.

Matthew Kolodesh was sentenced to 176 months in prison and ordered to pay \$16.2 million

in restitution to Medicare and \$16.2 million in a forfeiture money judgment for orchestrating a scheme to defraud Medicare through his home hospice business. A federal jury found Kolodesh guilty of conspiracy to commit health care fraud, 21 counts of health care fraud, 11 counts of money laundering, and two counts of mail fraud. From 2003 to 2008, Kolodesh's business, Home Care Hospice, Inc. ("HCH"), located on Grant Avenue in NE Philadelphia, submitted false claims to Medicare totaling approximately \$16.2 million for patients that were not eligible for hospice services, and for patients that never received the level of hospice services billed by HCH.

#### **June 2014:**

Gomer Thomas Williams was sentenced to two years in prison and ordered to pay restitution for a scheme to defraud clients of the legal firm where he worked. Williams defrauded four of his trust and estate clients of approximately \$503,361 by diverting funds from his clients' accounts to his personal accounts, and by overbilling his clients for legal work that was not performed.

Rafael Cordero was sentenced to 15 years in prison for interfering with the federal drug investigation of the Christian Serrano/Edwin Medina Drug Trafficking Organizations ("DTOs"). Cordero, who at the time was a 23-year veteran of the Philadelphia Police Department, provided sensitive law enforcement information about drug investigations to his half-brother, David Garcia, a member of the Serrano/Medina DTOs.

You can find press releases about the cases we charge on our website:

[www.justice.gov/usao/pae](http://www.justice.gov/usao/pae)