

Southern District of Florida

Press Release

BROTHERS ARRESTED FOR PASSPORT MISUSE AND AGGRAVATED IDENTITY THEFT

March 7, 2008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

R. Alexander Acosta, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, and Jonathan I. Solomon, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, James M. Foster, Special Agent in Charge, Department of State, Diplomatic Security Service, Yeudele Allen, Office of Inspector General, United States Postal Service, Roland Maye, Special Agent in Charge, Office of Inspector General, Social Security Administration, Anthony V. Mangione, Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the Minor Vice Task Force, comprised of officers from the City of Miami Police Department, Miami-Dade Police Department, and the Miami Beach Police Department, announced today the arrest of defendants **Alvin L. Fowler** and **Warren M. Fowler** for misuse of a U.S. passport, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 1544 and 2, and aggravated identity theft, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1028A(a)(1).

If convicted of the passport misuse, the Fowlers face a maximum term of imprisonment of ten years, followed by a term of supervised release of up to three years, and a \$250,000 fine. If convicted of identity theft, each defendant faces at least one consecutive two year term of imprisonment to the passport misuse, followed by a term of supervised release of up to one year, and a \$250,000 fine.

According to the Criminal Complaint filed March 5, 2008, a confidential source, under the direction of the FBI, conducted a series of undercover purchases of personal identification documents. Throughout these conversations, Alvin L. Fowler offered the confidential source U.S. passports for sale. Alvin L. Fowler allegedly sold the identification documents of seven (7) individuals, including birth certificates, Social Security verification letters, and W-2 wage and tax statements, to the confidential source. Thereafter, the confidential source received by U.S. mail, packages with the identification documents at various South Florida addresses. In addition, Alvin L. Fowler provided the confidential source with emails containing scanned pictures of U.S. passports, and offered the passports for sale, at a price of \$7,500.00 for one, \$21,500.00 for three, and \$28,000.00 for four.

Further investigation revealed that all of the identification documents and the scanned US passports received by e-mail belonged to individuals who had previously used a passport expediting service company in Atlanta, Georgia, to expedite their applications for a new or replacement passport. The expediting service is a private company

providing a handling service to those who want to expedite the passport process, paying a greater fee for the service.

Investigation also revealed that defendant Warren M. Fowler, brother of Alvin L. Fowler, was employed at the expediting service. From February, 2008, through March, 2008, the FBI confidential source received five (5) U.S. passports and accompanying identification documents, via mail, from Alvin L. Fowler. All of these individuals had also applied for passports at the expediting service. A post-arrest search of Alvin L. Fowler's Fort Lauderdale hotel room resulted in the seizure of an additional four (4) U.S. passports, a notebook containing approximately 800 names with corresponding dates of birth, and other personal identification documents, including blank birth certificates from various states. A post-arrest search of Warren M. Fowler's residence in Georgia resulted in the seizure of six boxes, with approximately 700 passport applications in each box.

Mr. Acosta commended the cooperative investigative efforts of all the federal agencies and local law enforcement involved. This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Russell Koonin.

A copy of this press release may be found on the website of the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida at <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/fls>. Related court documents and information may be found on the website of the District Court for the Southern District of Florida at <http://www.flsd.uscourts.gov> or on <http://pacer.flsd.uscourts.gov>.

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