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United States
Department of Justice
United States Attorney
Central District of California
Debra W. Yang

Mission Viejo Teen Guilty in Internet Auction Fraud; Defendant Also Admits $400,000 Bank Fraud An Orange County man has pleaded guilty to conspiracy and bank fraud charges in connection with an Internet auction fraud scheme and a second plot to defraud a bank out of $400,000.

Cole Bartiromo, 19, of Mission Viejo, pleaded guilty Friday afternoon before United States District Judge John F. Walter in Los Angeles.

Bartiromo pleaded guilty to count one of a superseding indictment returned last week by a federal grand jury. That charge, conspiracy to commit wire fraud and mail fraud, involved a scam in which Bartiromo offered for sale on e-Bay.com items such as cellular telephones and tire rims. Bartiromo collected money from successful bidders across the United States and Canada, but he never shipped the items to his victims. According to a plea agreement filed in this case, Bartiromo "never intended to sell any items to anyone but, rather, always intended to accept money for payment and then fail to deliver any merchandise."

Bartiromo also pleaded guilty to bank fraud for attempting to convince a Wells Fargo Bank employee into wiring $400,000 to him. Working with two co-defendants, Bartiromo attempted to have the money wired from a Wells Fargo account to an offshore account he had set up. Bartiromo also asked the Wells Fargo employee to cash checks he had received in the Internet auction fraud scheme.

During the hearing on Friday, Judge Walter inquired about Bartiromo's statements to the press that he "insisted he was innocent." Bartiromo told the court that these statements were false and that he was willingly pleading guilty to the felony charges.

Judge Walter is scheduled to sentence Bartiromo on May 10. As a result of his guilty pleas, Bartiromo faces a maximum statutory penalty of 35 years in federal prison.

Bartiromo's co-defendants → Theo Liu, 20, of Mission Viejo, and Oscar Godinez, 20, of Lake Forest → are scheduled to go on trial before Judge Walter on March 9. They are both charged in relation to the e-Bay scheme and the attempted bank fraud.

This case was investigated by the United States Secret Service and the Orange County Sheriff's Department. CONTACT: Assistant United States Attorney Robert McGahan (213) 894-5416
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