NEWS RELEASE

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SECOND DEFENDANT IN INTERNET SCHEME THAT DEFRAUDED TRUCKING COMPANIES SENTENCED TO FEDERAL PRISON

Several weeks after his codefendant was sent to prison for nearly six years, a Los Feliz man was sentenced today to 55 months in federal prison for using a federal Internet site and the United States mails to defraud trucking companies of more than $2.7 million.

Viacheslav Berkovich, 34, of the Los Feliz section of Los Angeles, was sentenced today by United States District Judge John F. Walter. In addition to the prison term, Judge Walter ordered Berkovich to pay restitution to the approximately 300 victims of the scheme.

Judge Walter previously sentenced Berkovich's co-defendant to 70 months in prison. Nicholas Lakes, also known as Dmitry Nadezhdin, 35, of Glendale, California, was sentenced on June 29.

Judge Walter today imposed a tentative restitution order of $2,773,074, which will be finalized after the court considers additional submissions from attorneys in the case. The government already has recovered $1.4 million from Lakes.

Lakes and Berkovich pleaded guilty in February to computer fraud and mail fraud charges, admitting that they defrauded trucking brokers and trucking companies through use of the Internet. Using bogus corporate and individual identities, Lakes and Berkovich accessed the Safety and Fitness Electronic Records System (SAFER) Internet website of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration of the United States Department of Transportation. The government provides the SAFER website to the

trucking industry to register brokerages that offer trucking jobs to move goods by truck and trucking companies that move those goods.

Lakes and Berkovich accessed the SAFER website with the intent to use a fictitious brokerage to transact trucking loads and collect payment from the original broker. Lakes and Berkovich fraudulently accessed the SAFER website and commercial “loadboards” to bid on trucking jobs from legitimate brokerages and then “double broker” the jobs to legitimate trucking companies. Lakes and Berkovich collected payment from the legitimate brokerages, but never paid the victim trucking companies for the actual trucking work that was done.

As an example of a fraudulent transaction, in January 2008, Lakes and Berkovich accessed the Internet Truckstop “loadboard” and obtained information about a trucking load being brokered by Dallas-based Stevens Transport. Using the name of Vega Trucking, one of the fictitious companies they had registered on the SAFER website, Lakes and Berkovich agreed with Stevens Transport to transport the load for $3,400. Lakes and Berkovich then used the name of Barkfelt Transport, a fraudulent trucking brokerage, to double-broker the load by hiring victim RK Trucking to transport the load for $4,000. RK Trucking transported the load, but never got paid for its work. Lakes and Berkovich, however, received a $3,390 check in the mail from Stevens Transport.

This case against Lakes and Berkovich is the product of an investigation by the Department of Transportation, Office of the Inspector General.

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