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Eight Charged in Relation to Fake IDs Sold on Internet

LOS ANGELES → Federal prosecutors have charged eight men involved in an international conspiracy to sell and obtain bogus identification documents that are legitimately issued only by state motor vehicle offices. Two men who operated several websites that offered the counterfeit identification were named in a criminal complaint filed this week. Five convicted felons → including a child molester from Virginia → allegedly sought bogus, but authentic-looking documents with assumed names from the websites.

The case involves several websites with names such as fakeidsite.com, fakeidsource.com and sob-ids.com that offered → exact→ or → novelty→ replicas of state driver's licenses. While the websites were located on computer servers in other countries, the two men who operated the sites were in Riverside. Mail from those attempting to obtain counterfeit identification was sent to other countries, but was redirected to mail drops in Temecula and Lake Elsinore.

While federal investigators began looking into the fake ID websites, the Riverside District Attorney's Office opened an investigation after receiving a series of complaints about the company that the websites claimed produced the identification documents. The state investigation resulted in the arrest of several defendants, including John McLellan and Jerrod Lochmiller, who were the operators of the three websites. In the Spring of 2001, both men agreed to plead guilty to felony charges in Riverside Superior Court, and McLellan agreed to cease operation of the websites and to turn over evidence to federal investigators.

After reviewing materials provided by McLellan, the United States Postal Inspection Service determined that most of the applications for fake IDs were from underage drinkers who wanted to unlawfully enter bars and clubs. However, several convicted felons who sought identifications under different names were also identified.

Because felons and others with suspended driver's licenses were seeking the bogus documents, federal authorities, including the United States Marshals Service, decided to continue the investigation by opening an undercover website that would offer fake IDs. On June 1, 2001, the undercover site → www.fakeidworld.com → went online. During the 15 months that the site was in operation, approximately 430 applications for counterfeit identification were submitted.

Again, most of the applications were from underage drinkers, but several convicted felons sought identities under different names.

Based on information obtained from the undercover website and from the sites operated by McLellan and Lochmiller, six men who sought counterfeit identification in assumed names were charged in the criminal complaint filed this week. They are:

→ John Donald Sanfelice, 61, of Norfolk, Virginia, who is pending sentencing following a conviction on charges of child molestation;

→ Mario Alvarez, 37, of Sunny Isles, Florida, who attempted to obtain identification in the name of a deceased felon with a lengthy criminal record;

→ Eric John Duerr, 26, a fugitive who once lived in Eugene, Oregon and may have resided in San Francisco, who is wanted for failing to appear in court in Oregon on charges of driving under the influence;

→ Reginald Alphonse Robinson, 33, of Gaithersburg, Maryland, who has been convicted of several financial crimes;

→ Stephen Bruce Jett, 37, of Goleta, California, who was convicted in Virginia on forgery and drug charges and in California of driving under the influence; and

→ Randy Grill, 45, of New York, who was convicted in New York on financial and narcotics offenses.

Sanfelice is in custody in Virginia and the other five men are fugitives. McLellan and Lochmiller were charged because they allegedly returned to the counterfeit identification business this past summer while on probation in the state court case. An investigator with the Riverside County District Attorney's Office noticed that sob-ids.com had resumed operation. A probation warrant was executed at McLellan's residence, and authorities discovered information, including passwords, related to the sob-ids.com and other websites dealing with fake IDs. Lochmiller's residence was also searched, and investigators found evidence linking him to the sites. Another search in October at a mail drop in Temecula linked to Lochmiller yielded numerous order forms for counterfeit documents.

The new fake ID sites, included one → www.fightidentitytheft.org → that was nothing more than a review of websites that offered counterfeit documents, with the most positive reviews given to sites operated by McLellan and Lochmiller.

McLellan, a 46-year-old Murrieta resident, was taken into custody Tuesday for allegedly violating his probation. He was taken into federal custody on Thursday, and he is making his first court appearance this afternoon in United States District Court in Riverside. Lochmiller, a 29-year-old Murrieta resident, is a fugitive being sought by authorities.

All eight defendants are charged with conspiracy, a felony that carries a sentence of up to five years in federal prison.

A criminal complaint contains allegations that a defendant has committed a crime. Every defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

The investigation is this case was conducted by the United States Postal Inspection Service and the Riverside County District Attorney's Office. The United States Marshals Service; the California Department of Motor Vehicles; the Social Security Administration, Office of Inspector General; the Defense Criminal Investigative Service and the Federal Bureau of Investigation provided substantial assistance. CONTACT: Assistant United States Attorney Christopher Johnson (213) 894-2688 Release No. 02-182

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