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Former Sacramento Man Arrested in eBay Auction Scam

SACRAMENTO--United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that GILBERT VARTANIAN, 33, formerly of Sacramento, was arrested in Fremont, California, for extensive fraud committed on eBay, a popular Internet auction house. Defendant VARTANIAN was indicted by a federal grand jury on January 6, 2005, but the Indictment was sealed until this morning. VARTANIAN was arrested today and will be arraigned before United States Magistrate Judge Gregory G. Hollows at 2:00 p.m.

The case is the product of an extensive investigation by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

According to Assistant U.S. Attorney Robin Taylor who is prosecuting the case, the defendant is charged with 12 counts of mail fraud. The defendant is alleged to have engaged in a scheme to defraud by advertising sporting event tickets and watches on eBay. The defendant offered tickets to events for the New York Knickerbockers, Pittsburgh Steelers, New England Patriots, New York Giants, Green Bay Packers, Philadelphia 76ers, and the New York Jets, as well as for boxing and auto racing events. He also offered Rolex watches. The ads placed by the defendant contained numerous false statements, and instructed customers to send him checks and money orders, usually to his private postal mailbox. Although defendant VARTANIAN received payment, he did not deliver the merchandise as represented. In most instances, he failed to respond entirely. In other instances, the defendant mailed the eBay purchaser an empty envelope or a blank slip of paper. As a result of the fraud, VARTANIAN unlawfully obtained more than $93,324.52 from more than 10 victims.

For the mail fraud violations, defendant VARTANIAN faces a maximum of 20 years imprisonments per count, a $250,000 fine, and restitution.

The Indictment contains only accusations, and defendant VARTANIAN is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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