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ALEXANDRIA NEWPORT NEWS NORFOLK RICHMOND

UNITED STATES ATTORNEY CHUCK ROSENBERG

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Jim Rybicki
Public Information Officer
Phone: (703) 842-4050 Fax: (703) 549-5202
E-Mail: usavae.press@usdoj.gov
Website: www.usdoj.gov/usao/vae

Further Information Contact:
Laura Taylor (804) 819-5400

Indictment in Ongoing ID Theft Scheme Coordinated From a Federal Correctional Institute

(Richmond, VA) - John Kenneth Leighnor, Jr., age 49, who is currently located in Petersburg, Virginia, was indicted today by a Federal Grand Jury on three counts of mail fraud and eight counts of aggravated identity theft, both in violation of federal law. Chuck Rosenberg, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia; Guy Cottrell, Postal Inspector in Charge, United States Postal Inspection Service, Washington Division; and Jennifer Smith Love, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Richmond Field Office, made the announcement. If convicted on all charges, Leighnor faces a maximum term of 76 years in prison, a \$2,750,000 fine, and full restitution for any losses incurred by the victims of the scheme.

According to court records, the defendant was involved in an ongoing identity theft scheme that he coordinated from the Federal Correctional Institute in Petersburg, Virginia. Leighnor identified many of his intended victims by reviewing obituaries and dormant Swiss bank account lists for Holocaust victims. For the Holocaust victims, Leighnor obtained dormant Swiss bank account lists which detailed the "names of owners and Power of Attorney Holders of Swiss bank accounts that were open or opened between 1933 and 1945 and whose owners were probably or possibly victims of Nazi persecution . . ."

Leighnor drafted, with the above identifying information for his targeted victims, correspondence to be mailed to various governmental agencies and other organizations in order to obtain official documentation for the targeted victims. In connection with each mailing, the indictment alleges that Leighnor either claimed that he was the targeted victim or that he was a lawyer, advocate, or other designated representative for the targeted victim. He requested the victim's personal documentation, such as birth certificates, family information, undergraduate transcripts, enrollment applications, and death certificates. The defendant's fraudulent letters requested that all return correspondence be sent to his attention at various addresses, including: "Dept. 14375-077, P.O. Box 1000, Petersburg, Virginia 23804," while concealing the fact that

the correspondence would actually be delivered to the defendant at the Federal Correctional Institute in Petersburg, Virginia and that “14375-077” was the defendant’s federal prisoner identification number.

The indictment alleges that upon receiving the victim’s identifying information, he planned on either: (1) using the victims’ identifying information for obtaining passports, birth certificates, driver’s licenses, and European Union Identification Cards in the victims’ names for use in traveling and obtaining money, funds, and credit from unnamed financial institutions, and other institutions and individuals; or (2) using the Holocaust victims’ identifying information to obtain family genealogy information from the German government for use in identifying the descendants of Holocaust victims. With the Holocaust victim information, Leighnor falsely represented himself as the descendant of a Holocaust victim and planned to file claims with the Claims Resolution Tribunal (the entity charged with handling claims on Swiss Bank accounts believed to be abandoned by victims of Nazi Persecution).

The indictment further alleges that Leighnor’s used fraudulent mailings in connection with his scheme to obtain information from a number of different organizations, including the Bundesverwaltungsamt (translated as “Federal Office of Administration”) in Germany; the Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany in Chicago, Illinois; the Dienst Persoonsgegevens (translated as “Privacy Service”) in Amsterdam; Baylor University, Office of the Registrar, in Waco, Texas; the General Register Office for Scotland; the Embassy of Switzerland in Washington, D.C.; and others.

The investigation was conducted by the United States Postal Inspection Service and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Assistant United States Attorney Michael Gill is prosecuting the case for the United States.

Defendants are presumed to be innocent until and unless proven guilty.

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

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