



**UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE**  
*Eastern District of Virginia*

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**Leader of \$1.5 Million ID Theft Ring Sentenced 200 Months in Prison**

ALEXANDRIA, Va. – Leonardo Darnell Zanders, 49, of Dolton, Ill., was sentenced today to 200 months in prison for his role as one of the leaders in a nationwide identity theft ring that has resulted in a total loss of approximately \$1.5 million involving at least 10 financial institutions. He was also sentenced to 5 years of supervised release and ordered to pay \$1,414,519.80 in restitution.

Neil H. MacBride, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia; Keith Fixel, Inspector in Charge of the United States Postal Inspection Service, Charlotte Division; and Jeffrey W. Irvine, Special Agent in Charge of the Washington Field Office of the United States Secret Service, made the announcement after sentencing by United States District Judge Gerald Bruce Lee.

After six of seven scheduled witnesses testified at trial, Zanders pled guilty on Sept. 21, 2009, to conspiring to commit bank fraud. According to testimony at trial and court documents, Zanders recruited and directed conspirators in a nationwide fraud scheme to steal money from individuals and financial institutions from January 2007 through May 2009. Zanders worked with Clyde Austin Gray Jr., of Waldorf, Md., to pay other co-conspirators to pickpocket, steal and compromise the personal identification and bank account information of victims, and then used the information to make counterfeit driver's licenses and military identification cards. Zanders distributed the fake IDs, along with counterfeit checks drawn on the victims' bank accounts and other bank account information, to other co-conspirators. In trial, a co-defendant, Darrell Earl Price, testified that Zanders gave him checks in the name of Ben and Anna Bernanke, and Price used those checks in the bank-fraud scheme.

Court records state that Zanders directed others in the scheme to use the IDs and stolen bank information to impersonate victims and make split deposit transactions – depositing a check drawn on the bank account of another victim, and then siphoning the money out of the falsely inflated account. His co-conspirators returned a percentage of the stolen money to Zanders, who in turn distributed some of the proceeds to other co-conspirators. According to court documents

associated with this conspiracy, the total fraud loss, including intended loss, attributed to the conspiracy is approximately \$1.5 million.

This case was investigated by the United States Secret Service and the United States Postal Inspection Service. Assistant United States Attorney Timothy D. Belevetz and Special Assistant United States Attorney Karen Servidea are prosecuting the case on behalf of the United States.

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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