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For Immediate Release

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District Attorney Charges Eleven in Connection with Identity Theft Ring

Defendants Include Russian Nationals Working as Pedi-Cab Drivers

San Diego County District Attorney [Bonnie M. Dumanis](#) today announced 19 felony charges have been filed against eleven individuals accused of conspiracy, grand theft, credit card forgery, and identity theft. The defendants are primarily Russian and Armenian nationals. If convicted, the defendants face between six and 35 years in state prison.

“These individuals didn’t stop at one scheme. They set up a variety of complicated scams to defraud the government and profit from identity theft,” said DA Dumanis.

The investigation was conducted by the Regional Fraud Task Force, in cooperation with the FBI, United States Secret Service, the District Attorney’s Office and San Diego Police Department. Arrested were: Karen Karapetyan, 48; Khachik Karapetyan, 25; Ruslan Kipnis, 33; Armen Astsaturov, 36; Gariy Agadzhanian, 32; Andrey Babkin, 20; Mikhail Margis, 21; Igor Muratov, 21; Elizaveta Chernova, 21; Arman Eritsian, 31; and Davit Karapetyan, 22.

Some of the individuals are in the United States on work visas and have been placed on Immigration and Customs Enforcement holds as a result of their arrest. Several others are part of a group that brought Russian citizens here, helped them obtain jobs as pedi-cab drivers, then used them to set up bank accounts to receive IRS wire transfers based on fraudulent tax returns.

Other fraud schemes the group operated include making counterfeit credit cards to purchase Louis Vuitton purses which were then sold online, and using information obtained through identity theft to defraud insurance companies.

“We are very pleased with the outcome of this investigation and look forward to more successful cases against individuals who target our citizens and our government,” said San Diego Police Chief William Lansdowne.

Several of the defendants were taken into custody on October 7, 2009; others were already in custody on other matters. Arraignments are scheduled in Superior Court downtown at 1:30 p.m. on Friday, October 9th. The investigation is ongoing and anyone with information about the defendants is asked to contact the FBI at (858) 565-1255.

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