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News Releases

JANUARY 10, 2011 GREENBELT, MD

Maryland man who impersonated a federal immigration agent sentenced to 8 years in prison in fraud scheme Defendant also convicted of possessing ammunition after felony conviction

GREENBELT, Md. - Chief U.S. District Judge Deborah K. Chasanow sentenced Robert Fred Mejia, 29, of Germantown, Md., to eight years in prison, followed by three years of supervised release, for conspiring to impersonate a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officer and to transport money obtained by fraud across state lines; transporting money obtained by fraud, in connection with a fraudulent scheme to provide immigration services; and being a felon in possession of ammunition.

Judge Chasanow also entered an order requiring Mejia to pay restitution of \$595,500. Mejia will begin serving his federal sentence after completing his state sentences or on April 28, 2014, whichever comes first.

The sentence was announced by U.S. Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein; Special Agent in Charge William Winter of ICE's Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in Baltimore; Special Agent in Charge Peter P. Paradis, Sr. of the Department of Homeland Security - Office of Inspector General; Chief J. Thomas Manger of the Montgomery County Police Department; and Montgomery County State's Attorney John McCarthy.

"Robert Mejia abused the public's trust for his personal gain by offering to provide immigration services, impersonating an immigration official, and even using threats," said William Winter, special agent in charge of ICE HSI in Baltimore. "Mejia's impersonation of a law enforcement officer poses a serious threat to public safety and will not be tolerated. This sentence shows that people who perpetrate these schemes will be held accountable for their actions."

According to Mejia's plea agreement, from December 2007 to June 2009, Mejia and a conspirator charged more than 50 individuals for immigration services they did not provide. On numerous occasions, Mejia and his co-conspirator caused the victims in Washington D.C. and Virginia to bring \$5,000 or more to Gaithersburg, Maryland to pay for the purported immigration services. Mejia and the co-conspirator completed immigration documents and had fingerprints taken for the individuals. No paperwork was ever filed on behalf of those clients, however.

As part of the fraud scheme, during meetings with the individuals seeking immigration assistance, Mejia dressed as an ICE employee, wearing a shirt bearing the letters "ICE"; what appeared to be a gun in a holster and pepper spray; a bullet proof vest; and a hat bearing the letters "ICE." Mejia also displayed what appeared to be an ICE identification badge and drove a vehicle that resembled a police vehicle. At no time was Mejia employed by ICE or any other agency of the United States.

As a result of the fraud, between 50 and 250 victims from the District of Columbia and Virginia lost between \$400,000 and \$1 million.

In addition, Mejia admitted that he illegally possessed 50 rounds of 9 mm ammunition and 49 rounds of .44-40 ammunition, which were seized by law enforcement during a search of his home on June 26, 2009. Mejia was prohibited from possessing the ammunition due to a previous 2nd degree assault conviction in Montgomery County.

Mejia remains detained.

Mejia was previously convicted of related state charges and was sentenced to 70 years in prison, with all but 10 years suspended, on those charges in November, 2010 and to 17 months in prison for a probation violation.

United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein thanked ICE HSI; the Department of Homeland Security - Office of Inspector General; ICE's Office of Professional Responsibility; the Montgomery County Police Department; and the Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office for their work in this investigation and prosecution. Mr. Rosenstein commended Assistant U.S. Attorney Mara Zusman Greenberg, who prosecuted the case.

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U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.

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