

NEWS

United States Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney, District of New Jersey
401 East State Street, Room 430
Trenton, New Jersey 08608



Christopher J. Christie, U.S. Attorney

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Assistant U.S. Attorney
NORV MCANDREW
856-989-0569

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Social Security Administration Employee
Admits to Selling False Social Security Cards

(More)

Greg Reinert, PAO
Public Affairs Office
<http://www.njusao.org>

856-757-5233
973-645-2888

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TRENTON – A former employee of the U.S. Social Security Administration Office in Trenton pleaded guilty today to an Information charging that she agreed with others to distribute genuine Social Security cards to illegal aliens, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

Elizabeth Rivera, 36, of Camden, entered her plea in U.S. District Court in Trenton before Judge Anne E. Thompson, who scheduled sentencing for May 5.

Rivera pleaded guilty to conspiracy to possess with the intent to unlawfully transfer 100 or more identification documents, namely, Social Security cards. This charge carries a maximum penalty of 5 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000.

At her plea hearing, Rivera admitted that between December 2000 and April 2003, while working as a customer service representative at the Social Security Administration in Trenton, she conspired with Ronald David Hoppe, 32, and his wife Viviana, 25, both of Hightstown, to process Social Security card applications for individuals who were not entitled to them in exchange for cash.

Rivera admitted that she agreed with David to process Social Security card applications for individuals whom she did not interview, although interviewing applicants was a requirement of the Social Security Administration for original Social Security cards. Furthermore, Rivera admitted that she processed the applications without personally observing identification documents which would prove the applicant's legal basis for obtaining a Social Security number. Rivera admitted to doing so knowing that genuine Social Security cards would be generated by the Social Security Administration and sent to the addresses submitted on the applications.

The Criminal Complaint charging Rivera alleges that in December 2002, a cooperating witness, who was an illegal alien, paid another unidentified individual \$1,500 for the purpose of getting a genuine Social Security card. According to the Complaint, in January 2003, Rivera processed, signed and dated a Social Security application which contained the identifying information of the cooperating witness and caused a genuine Social Security card to be subsequently generated in Maryland and sent to the address of the cooperating witness.

David Hoppe admitted conspiring with Rivera and pleaded guilty to a separate Information that charged he conspired with Rebecca Rivera Asencio, 34, of Trenton, and Jorge Galeano, 31, of Trenton, to possess with the intent to unlawfully transfer identification documents, namely, Social Security cards. Asencio, Galeano and David Hoppe pleaded guilty on July 16, 2004. A news release covering their guilty pleas is available online at: <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/nj/publicaffairs>.

Judge Thompson sentenced Asencio to 15 months in prison and three years of supervised release; Galeano was sentenced to 14 months in prison and three years of supervised release; David Hoppe was sentenced to 15 months in prison and three years of supervised release. Viviana Hoppe, who pleaded guilty to conspiracy to unlawfully transfer false identification documents and structuring currency to evade reporting requirements, is expected to be sentenced on Wednesday, February 2.

Christie credited Special Agents with IRS Criminal Investigations, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Patricia J. Haynes, and the Office of Inspector General, Social Security Administration.

The Government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Norv McAndrew of the Criminal Division in Trenton.

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Defense Attorney: Robert A. Greenberg, Esq. Haddonfield