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CENTRAL DISTRICT *of* ILLINOIS

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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Central District of Illinois

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, June 20, 2018

Alabama Computer Store Owner Charged in Fraud Scheme to Acquire, Sell Government Computers Intended for Schools, Nonprofit Organizations

PEORIA, Ill. – An Athens, Alabama computer store owner has been charged with exploiting a government computer surplus program for his personal benefit. A federal grand jury today returned its indictment of Steven Mays, 50, of Athens, Ala.

The indictment alleges that from 2007 to late 2017, Mays engaged in a scheme to defraud “Computers for Learning,” a program administered by the General Services Administration. The CFL program facilitated the transfer of computers and related equipment owned by the federal government but excess to its needs, directly to schools and some educational nonprofit organizations at no cost.

Over the decade-long scheme, the indictment alleges Mays fraudulently obtained computer equipment at an original cost to the U.S. government of more than \$22 million, which he sold at his Athens, Ala., computer company and on eBay.

The indictment alleges Mays created multiple CFL user identifications on behalf of Dwight Baptist Academy, a church school in Dwight, Ill. Mays allegedly represented to the school that the equipment he obtained through the program was “junk,” and that he would refurbish the equipment to make it useable by students at the school. Unbeknownst to the school, Mays acquired much more computer equipment in its name than was known to the school, and used that equipment to enrich himself.

To carry out the fraud scheme, Mays allegedly made false representations to GSA to request excess computer equipment. Mays enlisted others to pick up the equipment from the departments and agencies, and often had it transported to his computer store. Contrary to the conditions under which Mays acquired the computer equipment, he allegedly sold it at Mays Computer Company and on eBay. Some of the equipment was shipped to recyclers to obtain payment from the recyclers; other computer equipment was disposed of in dumpsters.

The investigation was conducted by the Offices of Inspectors General for GSA, the Department of Justice, the Environmental Protection Agency, NASA, the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Transportation, and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. The case is being prosecuted by Supervisory Assistant U.S. Attorney Darilynn J. Knauss.

Mays will be issued a summons to appear in federal court in Peoria, Ill., for arraignment on a date to be determined by the U.S. Clerk of the Court.

If convicted, for the offenses of mail fraud (four counts) and wire fraud (one count), the statutory penalty is up to 20 years in prison. For the offenses of theft of government property (one count), and interstate transportation of stolen property, the statutory penalty is up to 10 years in prison.

Members of the public are reminded that an indictment is merely an accusation; the defendant is presumed innocent unless proven guilty.

Topic(s):

Financial Fraud

Component(s):

USAO - Illinois, Central

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