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THURSDAY, JUNE 2, 2016
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**JUSTICE DEPARTMENT AND DUTCH AUTHORITIES ANNOUNCE
SIMULTANEOUS ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS AGAINST INTERNATIONAL MASS-
MAILING FRAUD SCHEMES TARGETING THE ELDERLY**

Thousands of U.S. Victims Defrauded Out of Over \$18 Million Annually

WASHINGTON – The United States filed a civil complaint in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York against an individual and two Dutch companies that allegedly engaged in multiple international mail fraud schemes that have defrauded elderly and vulnerable U.S. victims out of tens of millions of dollars, the Department of Justice announced. The Department sought a temporary restraining order, which was entered by the court yesterday, as well as preliminary and permanent injunctions to prevent the defendants from further victimizing U.S. consumers.

According to the complaint, U.S. residents received fraudulent direct mail solicitations that falsely claimed that the individual recipient had won, or would soon win cash or valuable prizes or otherwise come into great fortune. Victims sent payments through the U.S. and international mail systems to defendants Trends Service in Kommunikatie B.V. (Trends) and Kommunikatie Service Buitenland B.V. (KSB), both in Utrecht, Netherlands, and both owned and operated by defendant Erik Dekker, 54, of Langbroek, Netherlands.

At the same time that the Justice Department took this law enforcement action, Dutch law enforcement agents executed search warrants on the business address used by both companies and on Dekker's home address. The Dutch authorities also took control of the Dutch P.O. boxes used by the defendants to receive victim funds. The coordinated U.S. and Dutch enforcement actions seek to immediately stop the use of Dutch P.O. boxes to receive payments from fraud victims and to immediately stop the defendants from continuing to victimize the elderly. Learn more about the actions taken by Dutch authorities at:

<https://www.om.nl/actueel/nieuwsberichten/@94702/fiod-and-us-doj/>

“Schemes targeting elderly victims are increasingly international in scope, but geographic distance will not prevent us from seeking justice and holding bad actors accountable,” said Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Benjamin C. Mizer, head of the Justice Department's Civil Division. “Dutch authorities have done a great service to U.S. residents and elderly victims worldwide by addressing fraud facilitated within their borders. The Justice Department will continue to work with our international law enforcement partners to put a stop to fraud schemes that exploit vulnerable Americans.”

“As alleged in the complaint, defendants act as the clearinghouses for multiple international mail fraud schemes, taking money from thousands of elderly and vulnerable victims not only in this district but also throughout the United States,” said U.S. Attorney Robert L. Capers for the Eastern District of New York. “Together with the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and our international partner, the Fiscal Intelligence and Investigation Division of the Netherlands, we will track down, and stop, the schemes wherever they lead.”

“No one should ever be told they must pay a fee, or make a worthless purchase, to collect a prize,” said Inspector in Charge Regina L. Faulkerson of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service’s Criminal Investigation Group. “When that happens, it’s fraud - plain and simple - and Postal Inspectors work to keep those falsehoods out of the U.S. mail.”

The complaint filed June 1 in U.S. federal court in the Eastern District of New York alleges that, since at least 2012, Trends, KSB and Dekker have used P.O. boxes in the Netherlands to receive payments from various predatory mass-mailing fraud schemes. Solicitations are mailed from locations around the globe to residents in the United States. The solicitations purport to be personalized to each individual recipient, even though they are form letters mailed to hundreds of thousands of potential victims. Some solicitations instruct recipients to pay a processing fee in order to receive lottery winnings or other prizes; other solicitations urge recipients to purchase goods or services based on false promises that they will guarantee future lottery wins.

As alleged in the complaint, victims responded to the solicitations by completing a form and submitting a payment, usually around \$15 to \$55, via U.S. mail. The solicitations contain pre-addressed envelopes in which victims send payments. The envelopes are addressed to P.O. boxes in the Netherlands. Trends and KSB operate more than 50 of these P.O. boxes. Like other so-called “caging services,” Trends and KSB open the payment envelopes, remove the contents, enter payment and other personal information from the victims into a database and handle victim payments. The U.S. government estimates that U.S. victims mail more than \$18 million annually to the defendants’ P.O. boxes.

The government is seeking an injunction under the Anti-Fraud Injunction Statute immediately shutting down the defendants’ role in the fraudulent schemes in order to protect U.S. victims from further harm. The injunctions sought by the United States would enjoin the defendants from using the U.S. mail or causing the U.S. mail to be used, to distribute the fraudulent solicitations or to collect victim payments, and from selling lists of American victims who have responded to the solicitations. If granted, a permanent injunction would allow the U.S. Postal Service to intercept mail heading to the defendants, and return that mail—along with any money being sent to the defendants—to U.S. victims.

U.S. District Court Judge I. Leo Glasser for the Eastern District of New York set a hearing on the preliminary injunction on July 18 at 10 a.m.

The Justice Department's case is being handled by Trial Attorney Kerala Thie Cowart of the Civil Division's Consumer Protection Branch, Assistant U.S. Attorney John Vagelatos of the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Eastern District of New York and Postal Inspector Joseph R. Bizzarro of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

The claims made in the complaints are allegations only, and there has been no determination of liability.

A copy of the complaint, case # 16-CV-2770, can be found here:
<https://www.justice.gov/opa/file/863501/download>.

More information on fraud against the elderly is available here:
<https://www.justice.gov/elderjustice/>.

Additional information about the Consumer Protection Branch and its enforcement efforts may be found at <http://www.justice.gov/civil/consumer-protection-branch>.

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