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HRA EMPLOYEE CHARGED WITH IDENTITY THEFT

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), issued the following statement regarding the arrest today of MICHAEL WILLS, a Clerical Associate with the City's Human Resources Administration ("HRA"), on federal felony charges of stealing identity documents, such as copies of birth certificates and social security cards, from HRA and selling them to a person he believed would use them to obtain fraudulent drivers' licenses. The office of Preet Bharara, United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, is prosecuting this case.

WILLS, 59, of Manhattan, is charged with the Identity Fraud in Connection with Identification Documents, 18 USC 1028 (a) (3) and Aggravated Identity Theft, 18 USC 1028A. A conviction of the charges is punishable by up to 15 years in prison.

Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "This errant City employee not only betrayed the people who sought help from his agency but potentially jeopardized public safety by selling their personal documents to someone who he believed was obtaining fraudulent drivers' licenses, according to the charges. Thankfully, law enforcement agencies learned of the scam and stopped it."

According to the Indictment, in 2007 and 2008 WILLS was assigned to HRA's Riverview Job Center in Manhattan and in Brooklyn, where he had access to identification documents, including copies of birth certificates and social security cards, that public-assistance applicants filed at the Center. The investigation found that between 2007 and 2008 WILLS unlawfully took copies of identification documents from HRA and sold them to a person WILLS believed would use them to obtain driver's licenses in the names of the individuals shown on the documents.

WILLS has been employed with HRA since August 1990 and receives an annual salary of approximately \$31,952. He faces immediate suspension without pay.

Commissioner Gill Hearn thanked Preet Bharara, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York; HRA Commissioner Robert Doar and Christopher Paul, Special Agent-in-Charge of the New York Field Office of the Diplomatic Security Service of the United States Department of State, and their staffs for their assistance in this case.

The investigation was conducted jointly by DOI and the U.S. State Department's Diplomatic Security Service. Participating were, for DOI, Pat Russo, DOI's Inspector General for HRA, and members of his staff, including Deputy Inspector General Joseph Caputo and Chief Investigator Frank DeLisi, and, for the State Department, Special Agents Robert Picco, Patrick Kuznia, and Patrick Gavin.

Assistant United States Attorney Carrie Cohen of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York has been assigned to the prosecution.

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An indictment is an accusation. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

DOI is one of the oldest law-enforcement agencies in the country. The agency investigates and refers for prosecution City employees and contractors engaged in corrupt or fraudulent activities or unethical conduct. Investigations may involve any agency, officer, elected official or employee of the City, as well as those who do business with or receive benefits from the City.

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