Department of Justice

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TENNESSEE COUPLE CONVICTED FOR UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION FRAUD

HARRISBURG - The United States Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Pennsylvania announced today that Earl Lafayette Hall, III, age 35, of Arlington, Tennessee, and his wife, Renita Blunt, age 32, were convicted by a federal jury on conspiracy, mail fraud, money laundering, and aggravated identity theft charges related to an unemployment compensation fraud scheme. The five-day trial was held before United States District Court Judge Sylvia H. Rambo in Harrisburg.

According to U.S. Attorney Bruce D. Brandler, the jury returned with the guilty verdicts after approximately 2.5 hours of deliberation. Hall was convicted on 12 mail fraud counts, 10 money laundering counts, four aggravated identity theft counts, conspiracy to commit mail fraud, and conspiracy to commit money laundering. Blunt was convicted of conspiracy to commit mail fraud and aggravated identity theft counts. The jury also directed Hall to forfeit the sum of $30,000 and Blunt to forfeit $1,026.

Hall and Blunt were accused of applying for Veteran's unemployment compensation benefits under the Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Service Members Program, commonly known as "The UCX Program." The UCX Program is a federally funded U.S. Department of Labor program administered by the States. The jury found that Hall assumed the identity of five individuals between 2013 and 2014 in order to receive benefits under the program. The jury also found that Blunt assumed the identity of one individual to receive benefits under the program.

"Earl Lafayette Hall III and Renita Blunt misused the identities of others to submit counterfeit forms and steal money intended for individuals who experience unemployment after serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to investigate those who exploit the Unemployment Compensation for Ex-service Members Program," stated Richard Deer, Special Agent in Charge, Philadelphia Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General.

The investigation was conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, Office of Labor Racketeering & Fraud Investigations, U.S. Defense Criminal

Investigative Service, U.S. Postal Inspection Service with assistance from Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, Internal Audits Division, Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, Office of Unemployment Compensation Benefits and Policy, and the Pennsylvania Department of the Treasury, Office of Unemployment Compensation Disbursements. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Kim Douglas Daniel and Scott R. Ford prosecuted the case.

A sentence following a finding of guilt is imposed by the Judge after consideration of the applicable federal sentencing statutes and the Federal Sentencing Guidelines.

The maximum penalty under federal law is 20 years of imprisonment, a term of supervised release following imprisonment, and a fine. Under the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, the Judge is also required to consider and weigh a number of factors, including the nature, circumstances and seriousness of the offense; the history and characteristics of the defendant; and the need to punish the defendant, protect the public and provide for the defendant's educational, vocational and medical needs. For these reasons, the statutory maximum penalty for the offense is not an accurate indicator of the potential sentence for a specific defendant.

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