

Springfield pair plead guilty in online fraud investment scam

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Daniel Michael Wheatley, Sunshine Elise Merie Simmons, and Edwin Tolentino Garcia Admit Committing Internet High Yield Investment Scam and Money Laundering

EUGENE, Ore. — Daniel Michael Wheatley, 34, and Sunshine Elise Merie Simmons, 28, both of Springfield, Oregon, and Edwin Tolentino Garcia, 41, of Vancouver, Washington, pled guilty last week before U.S. District Judge Michael R. Hogan to Internet fraud-related crimes. Wheatley pled guilty to committing Internet fraud and to laundering money from the scheme. Garcia pled guilty to committing Internet fraud. Simmons pled guilty to concealing information from a bank so that certain financial transaction reports would not be filed.

In pleading guilty to the Internet fraud offense, Wheatley and Garcia admitted that they transmitted communications via www.profits4investingtoo.com on the Internet advertising high yield investment programs, knowing that no such high yield investments existed, and that money “invested” in the programs would not be invested. Instead, they knew that the “invested” money would be used for personal expenditures, such as a home, cars, electronics, furniture and jewelry. During the course of the offense, their conduct resulted in \$684,388.74 in losses to 9,756 victims.

In pleading guilty to the money laundering offense, Wheatley admitted that on January 31, 2006, he purchased a personal residence located at 636 South 41st Place, Springfield, Oregon, using \$244,102.01 in funds routed through a third-party bank account in the name of Garcia. Wheatley admitted that he knew these funds were derived from the fraudulent “high yield investment program.”

In pleading guilty to causing the failure to file a suspicious activity report, Simmons admitted that in January of 2006, she facilitated more than \$100,000.00 of deposits into a bank account and obtained a cashier’s check in the amount of \$244,102.01 which was used to purchase the residence located at 636 South 41st Place in Springfield. She admitted that she did so intending to hide or disguise the fact that the funds were derived from Internet fraud. In doing so, she admitted that she intended to evade reporting requirements and caused a bank to fail to file a Suspicious Activity Report for a currency transaction in excess of \$5,000.

In pleading guilty, Wheatley and Simmons agreed to forfeit their residence located at 636 South 41st Place in Springfield because it constitutes the proceeds of the Internet fraud offense.

All three defendants have already forfeited assets valued at approximately \$300,000 which were acquired with the proceeds of the offense. These assets include a 2005 Mercedes C230, a 2004 Hummer H2, electronic devices, furniture, jewelry, and over \$200,000 in cashier’s checks and currency.

Wheatley and Garcia are subject to a twenty (20) year term of imprisonment, a \$250,000.00 fine, and a three (3) year term of supervised release for the Internet fraud offense. Additionally, Wheatley is subject to a ten (10) year term of imprisonment, a \$250,000.00 fine, and a three (3) year term of supervised release for the money laundering offense. Simmons is subject to a ten (10) year term of imprisonment, a \$250,000.00 fine, and a three (3) year term of supervised release for causing a bank to not file a suspicious activity report.

The investigation was conducted by the United States Secret Service, the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation, and the Clark County, Washington, Sheriff's Office, with assistance from the Eugene Police Department and Springfield Police Department.

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