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Houston Man Sentenced for $20 Million ‘Black Market Peso Exchange’ Scheme

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For Immediate Release

Office of Public Affairs

One of the leaders of a criminal conspiracy that laundered more than $20 million through “shell” business bank accounts was sentenced today to 151 months in prison.

Acting Assistant Attorney General Mythili Raman of the Justice Department’s Criminal Division and U.S. Attorney Kenneth Magidson of the Southern District of Texas made the announcement.

Willie Whitehurst, 45, of Houston, was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Lee H. Rosenthal of the Southern District of Texas. In January and February 2013, Whitehurst and co-conspirators Enrique Morales, Fulton Smith and Anthony Foster pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit money laundering and conspiracy to operate an unlicensed money transmitting business. Another co-conspirator, Sarah Combs, also pleaded guilty to conspiracy to operate an unlicensed money transmitting business.

In August 2012, a federal grand jury in Houston indicted the five defendants for their parts in a large “Black Market Peso Exchange” scheme. From October 2009 to September 2011, the defendants placed U.S. currency gained through the sale of drugs in U.S. cities into bank accounts held in the names of the organization’s “shell” companies. The money was then transferred to different accounts in the U.S. and in Mexico. In exchange, pesos were transferred back to accounts owned by the organization’s clients.

Morales was previously sentenced to 188 months in prison, and Foster received a sentence of 121 months in prison. Smith was sentenced to 30 months, while Combs was sentenced to 24 months in prison.

The case was investigated by the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Internal Revenue Service – Criminal Investigation Division. Assistant U.S. Attorney Ted Imperato of the Southern District of Texas and Trial Attorney Keith Liddle of the Money Laundering and Bank Integrity Unit of the Criminal Division's Asset Forfeiture and Money Laundering Section prosecuted the case.

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