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SECRET SERVICE MIAMI FIELD OFFICE ARRESTS MEMBERS OF ORGANIZED ELECTRONIC CRIME RING IN SOUTH FLORIDA

(Miami, FL) – The United States Secret Service today announced the recent arrests and indictments of four members of an organized fraud ring in South Florida. In all, the individuals – identified as Miguel Alegria, 46, of Hialeah, FL; Raynier Pupo, 22, of Miami, FL; Ariel Montero, 32, of Aventura, Florida; and Javier Padron-Bravo, 35, of Aventura, FL – have been charged with aggravated identity theft, counterfeit credit card trafficking and conspiracy.

In a coordinated operation between the U.S. Secret Service's Miami and Nashville Field Offices earlier this year, Miami Electronic Crimes Task Force agents arrested Julio Lopez, age 30, and Lopez's girlfriend Anett Villar, age 26, both of Hialeah, FL, after receiving warrants for their arrests from the Nashville Field Office in an online carding investigation. Julio Lopez had used the screen name "Blinky" and had been identified as trafficking counterfeit credit cards and identifications for years over the Internet.

As a result of the initial investigation targeting Lopez (aka "Blinky"), evidence was discovered of an organized fraud ring of Cuban nationals, which included Alegria, Pupo, Montero and Padron-Bravo, operating in South Florida. These individuals were sending large amounts of money via E-Gold accounts to known cyber criminals in Eastern Europe in return for tens of thousands of stolen credit card account numbers. The stolen credit card account numbers were then used to counterfeit credit cards in "plants" throughout southern Florida.

As a result of these arrests, more than 200,000 credit card account numbers were recovered in connection with the ring's activity, which was responsible for fraud losses of more than \$75 million. Additionally, agents seized two pick-up trucks, \$10,000 cash and one handgun in connection with the case.

“This case demonstrates the potential for online criminals to inflict significant damage on a global scale, but this investigation and the resulting indictments and arrests should serve as stark reminders to cyber criminals that law enforcement will continue to pursue them wherever they are,” said Special Agent in Charge William Sims of the U.S. Secret Service’s Miami Field Office.

This investigation is just one example of the U.S. Secret Service’s cyber-initiatives to combat financial fraud and identity theft. These initiatives are designed to disrupt activity on criminal web forums, where the suspects openly engage in the sale of stolen and compromised credit card information, false identity documents and malicious software that enables criminals to obtain access to victims’ computers.

The U.S. Secret Service has taken a lead role in cyber crime investigations and, through a nationwide network of Electronic Crimes Task Forces, has established partnerships in both the law enforcement and business communities to protect the nation’s critical financial infrastructure.

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EDITOR’S NOTE: For questions concerning this release, please contact the United States Secret Service Miami Field Office at 305-863-5000.