



*United States Attorney
Southern District of New York*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JANUARY 24, 2007**

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**MAN SENTENCED TO 34 MONTHS IN PRISON
FOR INVOLVEMENT IN LARGE IDENTITY-THEFT RING**

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that LANRE ELEKEDE, a/k/a "getting2k@yahoo.com," a/k/a "getting2k@hotmail.com," was sentenced earlier today to 34 months in prison for his participation in an identity-theft scheme. United States District Judge RICHARD M. BERMAN imposed the sentence in Manhattan federal court. ELEKEDE is the lead defendant in the prosecution of a large identity-theft ring which was engaged in (among other things) stealing individual victims' personal identity information, sharing that information over the Internet with other members of the identity-theft ring, and using the information to commit various forms of fraud. According to the Complaint and the Indictment, as well as statements made in Court and in papers filed in connection with ELEKEDE's sentencing:

ELEKEDE and his co-conspirators stole the identities of at least 175 individuals and victimized a large number of financial institutions during the course of the scheme. Searches of ELEKEDE's e-mail addresses -- "getting2k@yahoo.com" and "getting2k@hotmail.com" -- yielded a large number of e-mails between ring members in which they exchanged credit card numbers, together with expiration dates and three-digit codes (which codes they typically referred to as "ikes"). The e-mails also included the personal identity information of a large number of individual victims -- which information ring members typically referred to as "infos" -- including victims' names, addresses, telephone numbers, social security numbers (referred to as "sola sola") and mother's maiden names ("mama name"). As detailed in the Complaint, ELEKEDE and his co-conspirators then used the stolen credit card numbers and identity information to commit various forms of fraud, including using the credit card numbers to make purchases over the Internet.

When ELEKEDE was arrested in Miami, Florida in December of 2004, the police found notebooks containing the personal identity information of numerous individuals -- including their names, addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and mother's maiden names -- numerous credit card and bank account numbers, contact information for a number of the financial institutions targeted by the ring, and the e-mail addresses of many of ELEKEDE's co-conspirators.

The investigation revealed a common thread linking a number of the victims; they had engaged in sports-related gambling over the Internet through a Costa Rica-based web site known as BetonSports. A number of the victims had submitted forms to BetonSports detailing their names, addresses, telephone numbers, social security numbers, mother's maiden names, credit card numbers, and other information. BetonSports PLC and its founder are under Indictment in the Eastern District of Missouri.

Mr. GARCIA praised the investigative efforts of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and thanked the United States Secret Service and the Miami-Dade Florida Police Department for their assistance in the investigation.

LANRE ELEKEDE, 32, is a native of Nigeria and, until his arrest, lived in Miami, Florida, and Chicago, Illinois.

Assistant United States Attorney MARCUS A. ASNER is in charge of the prosecution.

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