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FOUR FOUND GUILTY OF EXTORTION OF PRIVATE VAN DRIVERS

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that four individuals: HUI CHEN, HENG DE OH-YANG, a/k/a "Ou Yang," GUO CHAO ZHANG, a/k/a "The Controller," and YONG WANG, a/k/a "Jackie," were found guilty yesterday in Manhattan federal court, following a jury trial, of conspiracy and two counts of extortion in connection with a scheme to extort money from the drivers of private vans operating on a route between Manhattan and Brooklyn. HUI CHEN was additionally found guilty of conspiracy to obstruct justice and two counts of witness tampering. As established by documents filed in Manhattan federal court, the evidence at trial and statements made in open court:

From July 2004 through May 1, 2006, approximately 50 private vans transported passengers between the corner of East Broadway and Market Street, in Manhattan's Chinatown, and 8th Avenue, in Brooklyn. During that period of time, CHEN, OH-YANG, ZHANG, WANG and others forced the drivers of these vans to pay them a monthly extortion fee of \$200 to \$400 by using acts of violence and force against the drivers, threatening the drivers, and exploiting their fears of physical and economic harm. If a driver did not pay the monthly fee, ZHANG would prevent that driver from picking up and discharging passengers and from operating on the route. In order to keep the van drivers under the control of the defendants, WANG beat up two van drivers and threatened others with acts of violence. CHEN and OH-YANG were among the "bosses" of the organization running the extortion scheme and controlled access to the van driver group. CHEN also demanded an up-front payment of \$3000 from at least one van driver before that driver would be allowed to pick up passengers and operate on the route. Over the course of the extortion conspiracy, the four defendants took hundreds of thousands of dollars from the van drivers they victimized.

After her arrest in May 2006, CHEN participated in a conspiracy to obstruct the prosecution of the federal case against her. CHEN threatened and attempted to persuade one of the van drivers to stop cooperating with federal agents and to cause the charges against her to be dismissed. CHEN also asked another driver to falsely testify in court on CHEN's behalf.

Following the jury's verdict, United States District Judge DENNY CHIN revoked CHEN's bail and ordered her detained pending sentencing, which is scheduled for August 9, 2007. Judge CHIN continued bail pending sentencing for HENG DE OH-YANG, GUO CHAO ZHANG, and YONG WANG, but ordered them subject to home detention with electronic monitoring. CHEN, OH-YANG, ZHANG, and WANG each face a maximum of 20 years' imprisonment for each of the 3 extortion counts on which they were convicted. HUI CHEN additionally faces a maximum of 10 years for each of the three obstruction counts on which she was convicted, for a possible total of 90 years in prison. Another defendant named in the relevant Indictment, QUN LI, is still at large.

Mr. GARCIA praised the efforts of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the New York City Police Department for their work in the investigation and prosecution of this case.

Assistant United States Attorneys JONATHAN B. NEW and DAVID B. MASSEY are in charge of the prosecution.

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