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INTERNATIONAL CREDIT CARD AND IDENTITY THEFT FRAUD RING DISMANTLED

Fraud Estimated at \$12 Million; Nearly Four Dozen Individuals Charged Following 21-Month Investigation; Counterfeit Credit Cards Used To Steal Money and Buy Electronic Goods that Were Later Fenced; Stolen Credit Cards Allegedly Used Around the Globe

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown, joined by Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly, today announced that an international forged credit card and identity theft ring based in the New York-metropolitan area and with roots in Nigeria has been successfully dismantled following the indictment this week of forty-five individuals. The ring – which was comprised of three separate identity theft and forged credit card groups that employed multiple cells – is alleged to have been responsible for stealing the credit cards and personal credit information of thousands of American and Canadian consumers, costing these individuals, as well as financial institutions and retail businesses, more than \$12 million in losses over the past year alone.

District Attorney Brown said, “Our investigation reveals that – in terms of just the sheer number of people indicted – this is one of the largest identity theft networks uncovered in recent history and is just possibly the tip of a much larger global credit card trafficking operation. Besides draining the bank accounts of individuals throughout North America, we believe that the defendants – some of whom live in California, Illinois, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Toronto – also shipped stolen or fraudulently obtained credit cards to buyers around the world and that purchases were made in such far-off places as Japan, Saudi Arabia and Dubai. Particularly disturbing is that we have no way of knowing if any of these accounts have fallen into the hands of terrorists and are being used to finance their terrorist activities or to undermine the efforts of homeland security and other law enforcement officials intent on keeping our borders and citizens safe. Such a serious threat to public safety cannot go unchallenged. We will continue to work closely with our law enforcement colleagues to stamp out such fraud and help to maintain our nation’s safety and security.”

District Attorney Brown added, “Technological advances have made it increasingly easier to carry out identity theft and fraud – two of the fastest growing crimes in the United States and which afflicts millions of victims and costs billions of dollars in losses to consumers, businesses and financial institutions. In this case, some of the defendants are alleged to have activated consumers’ credit cards by utilizing SpoofCards which allow a caller to disguise the telephone number they’re calling from and even their voice and gender. From a law enforcement perspective, such cards are anything but a spoof. They are virtually untraceable and can be used by identity thieves and hackers to pose as government and financial entities as a means to unscrupulously obtain personal information from unsuspecting consumers and also by defendants in domestic violence cases to harass their victims.”

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Commissioner Kelly said, “When these suspects said ‘charge it’ they stole more than cash and goods. They robbed unsuspecting victims of their identities too. This was a sophisticated crime ring which met its just end through painstaking investigation by NYPD detectives and unstinting support by Queens prosecutors.”

District Attorney Brown said that the defendants have been charged in a series of indictments charging 784 pattern acts with, among other crimes, Enterprise Corruption under New York State’s Organized Crime Control Act. They are accused of being members and associates of three organized criminal enterprises that operated in Queens County and elsewhere and that, between April 18, 2008, and April 23, 2009, systematically schemed to defraud thousands of unsuspecting consumers and financial institutions – such as Citibank, Bank of America, Chase and HSBC and a series of Canadian banks – including President’s Choice Bank, CIBC, MBNA Canada and Bank of Montreal.

According to the charges, suppliers in the ring fraudulently obtained credit card accounts to be compromised. The accounts included NRI (non-received as issued) accounts [accounts where a credit or debit card was mailed to an account holder but was never actually received by the account holder]; accounts that were fraudulently taken over; and accounts that were fraudulently opened. Once the suppliers obtained the accounts, they would get the accounts prepared so that they could be accessed by leaders of identity theft cells. This was accomplished by turning the accounts over to:

- Account preparers – responsible for activating the accounts, which usually involved placing a phone call to a financial institution and impersonating the account holder by pretending to be calling from the account holder’s home phone. This was accomplished by using a Spoof Card, which allows a person to change the number that appears on the receiver’s caller ID and can make a man’s voice sound like a woman’s and vice versa. The account preparer would also change a PIN number, change the mailing address, add a secondary card user and/or increase the account’s credit limit;
- Account maintainers – responsible for paying off accounts in order to avoid fraud detection and increase credit lines. The maintainer would use funds from one account to pay off another account to keep it viable and to steadily increase its credit limit, at which point all the funds from the account would be drained; or
- Account washers – responsible for obtaining as much pedigree information on an account holder as possible so that other account preparers could then use the information to access the victim accounts in order to take over the accounts.

A supplier would then sell the accounts to identity theft cell leaders, who would either pay the supplier a flat fee for an account or a percentage of the funds accessed with the account. Prior to accessing the accounts, the cell leaders would turn the accounts over to a “mill” run by a document manufacturer who would create the forged credit cards and forged identification cards. A document manufacturer was paid for each dummy credit card and identification card he made. Once a cell leader had the fraudulent documents they were distributed to the ring’s foot soldiers and shoppers who actually accessed the accounts.

Foot soldiers would access the accounts using ATMs and bank tellers. While using an ATM was less risky, there was a limit as to the amount of money that could be withdrawn at any specific time (usually a few hundred dollars). Equipped with a forged credit card and a forged identification card (such as a

driver's license), a foot soldier could withdraw up to \$4,900 at a time at a bank. Shoppers were responsible for making purchases, usually high-end electronics with the stolen credit cards. The accounts the shoppers were given were those that had a high credit limit but no available cash advance. Shoppers were also responsible for finding "fences," who would buy the electronics from them.

The District Attorney said that the investigation – dubbed "Operation Plastic Pipe Line" – leading to this week's indictments and arrests began in September 2007 when police officers assigned to the Police Department's Identity Theft Squad commenced a joint investigation with the District Attorney's Economic Crimes Bureau into the large scale theft of Citibank credit cards and the subsequent use of the credit cards in Queens County and elsewhere. The investigation involved physical surveillance, intelligence gathering and court-authorized electronic eavesdropping on approximately one hundred different telephones and e-mail accounts in which thousands of conversations were intercepted – many of which required translation from Yoruba and Pidgin English to English.

In the largest of the criminal enterprise indictments, it is alleged that Wole "Shola" Ogunwen was the leader of the Shola Enterprise and supplied the various accounts to his cell leaders – Ayanwale Ganiyu, Anthony O. Johnson, Kola Falidaya Molake, Adebayo A. Animashaun and Charles Femi Adoyele and his manager Jones Omoyemi Osinowo – who managed the local cells and managed the compromising of the supplied accounts. The accounts were allegedly prepared for usage by the defendants Idaya Molake, Hassan O. Anibaba, Abiodun A. Shotonwa, Anthony O. Johnson, Abimbola Lana and Samuel A. Adeoba. Steven Trevor Jackson was alleged to have been the forged document manufacturer who provided the "Shola" Enterprise with the forged identification and credit cards. John Doe (a.k.a. Abe), Ike Nwabuoke and Abidemi Olajide allegedly were the foot soldiers who went to the banks to make the withdrawals or to stores to make purchases with the compromised accounts. According to the charges, when purchases were made with these accounts, the items, usually expensive electronics, would then allegedly be fenced to Ronan Hassoun, who operates Five Brothers Audio and Video Electronics at 43 Graham Avenue in Brooklyn. Finally, it is alleged that any funds obtained from the compromised accounts would then be paid up to Wole Ogunwen.

District Attorney Brown said that the twenty-six defendants charged in the Shola Enterprise Corruption indictment are also variously charged – along with ten others – in a second 309-count identity theft indictment. In addition, three of the purported cell leaders named in the Shola indictments – Charles Femi Adoyele, Ayanwale Ganiyu and Abdul Razack Yusuf – are charged in separate indictments with operating two smaller identity theft and forged credit card operation – the Femi Criminal Enterprise and the Ganiyu/Razack Criminal Enterprise.

District Attorney Brown noted that, as part of the investigation, court-authorized search warrants were executed earlier this week at 17 locations and resulted in the recovery of forged credit cards, credit reports, machines used to stamp credit card account information onto cards and nearly \$100,000 in cash.

Twenty-two of the defendants have been arraigned thus far before Queens Supreme Court Justice Richard L. Buchter.

The investigation was conducted by Detective Enrico Morriello of the New York City Police Department's Identity Theft Squad under the supervision of Sergeant Barry Neiss and Lieutenant Ruperto Aguilar and the command of Deputy Inspector Gregory T. Antonsen, of the Organized Theft and Identity Theft Task Force, and the overall supervision of Deputy Chief Jeremiah Quinlan, Commander of the Special Investigations Division, and Chief George F. Brown of the Detectives Bureau.

Assistance was also provided by the NYPD's Asset Forfeiture Unit – namely, Detective Raymond Phillips, Sergeant Stephen Scalza and Lieutenant Charles Scalzo – and its Fugitive Warrant Squad. Out of state assistance was provided by the Chicago Police Department, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, the Los Angeles County Sheriff Department, the Frederick (MD) Police Department and the Philadelphia Police Department.

Assisting also in the investigation were various members of the District Attorney's Economic Crimes Bureau – namely, Assistant District Attorney Edward Suh, Paralegal Ericka Loperena, Investigative Auditor Phylesia A. Lang, Consumer Fraud Representative Michael Albanesi, Trial Prep Assistant Ivory Lai and Secretary Robin R. McCray.

Assistant District Attorney Purvi Patel, of the Economic Crimes Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Gregory C. Pavlides, Bureau Chief, and Christina Hanophy, Deputy Bureau Chief, and the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Peter A. Crusco and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney Linda M. Cantoni.

District Attorney Brown expressed his appreciation to the United States Postal Inspection Service and the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles for their assistance and cooperation during the investigation.

It should be noted that an indictment is merely an accusation and that a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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Note to Editors: Press release e-version posted at www.queensda.org.

ADDENDUM

I. SHOLA ENTERPRISE CORRUPTION INDICTMENT (369 counts) (17 DEFENDANTS)

The defendants are all charged with enterprise corruption and are variously charged with second-degree criminal possession of a forged instrument, third- and fourth-degree grand larceny, third-degree attempted grand larceny, fourth-degree criminal possession of stolen property, petit larceny, attempted petit larceny, and fifth-degree conspiracy. If convicted, they each face up to 25 years in prison.

* denotes defendant is presently being sought.

	NAME/ADDRESS	ALLEGED ROLE
1	* Wole Ogunwen, of 187-47 Ilion Avenue, St. Albans, Queens	Supplier
2	Steven Trevor Jackson, 42, of 1271 Ocean Avenue in Brooklyn	Forged Document Manufacturer
3	Jones Omoyemi Osinowo, 49, of 250 East 29 th Street in Brooklyn	Cell Manager
4	Adebayo A. Animashaun (age and address unavailable)	Cell Manager
5	Ayanwale Ganiyu, 40, of 2020 East 41 st Street in Brooklyn	Cell Leader
6	Kola Falabake, 36, of 345 Montgomery Street in Brooklyn	Cell Leader
7	Charles Femi Adoyele, 55, of 7 Trebor Road in Massapequa, LI	Cell Leader
8	Anthony O. Johnson, 40, of 120 Beach 19 th Street in Far Rockaway, Queens	Cell Leader/Account Preparer

9	Idaya Molake, 43, of 341 10 th Street in Brooklyn.	Account Preparer
10	* Abiodun A. Shotonwa, 58, of 770 New York Avenue in Brooklyn	Account Preparer
11	Hassan O. Anibaba, 32, of 950 Rutland Road in Brooklyn	Account Preparer
12	Obimbola Lana, 45, of 1655 Undercliff Avenue in the Bronx.	Account Preparer
13	Samuel A. Adeoba (age and address unavailable)	Assistant Account Preparer
14	* John Doe (a/k/a Abe) (name, age and address unavailable)	Foot Solider
15	Abidemi Olajide, 50, of 1396 Flatbush Avenue in Brooklyn	Foot Solider
16	* Ike Nwabuoike, 41, of Canada	Foot Soldier
17	Ronan Hassoun, 38, of 2614 Quentin Road in Brooklyn	Fence (for electronics)

**II. SHOLA IDENTITY THEFT INDICTMENT (309 counts)
(27 DEFENDANTS)**

Seventeen of the individuals are those named in the Shola Enterprise Corruption indictment. Below is information on the additional 10 defendants)

The defendants are variously charged with first-, second- and third-degree identity theft, first- and third-degree attempted identity theft, third-degree unlawful possession of personal identification, third- and fourth-degree grand larceny, second-degree criminal possession of a forged instrument, fourth-degree criminal possession of stolen property, fifth-degree conspiracy, petit larceny and attempted petit larceny. If convicted, they each face up to seven years in prison.

* indicates that the defendant is presently being sought.

	NAME/ADDRESS	ALLEGED ROLE
18	Denis Lenoid, 49, of 617 East 39 th Street in Brooklyn	Forged Document Manager
19	Roden Daniels	Forged Document Manager
20	Fidelis Chukwuyem, 45, of 1037 East 99 th Street in Brooklyn	Forged Document Manager
21	Abdul Razack Yusuf, 48, of 380 Cozine Street in Brooklyn	Cell Leader
22	Jide Salako, 35, of 518 West 41 st Street in Los Angeles, California	Cell Leader
23	Olanrewaju A. Shittu, 45, of 765 Lincoln Avenue in Brooklyn	Cell Leader
24	Oladele Adeyemi, (age and address unavailable)	Account Preparer
25	* Vivian Ike, 47, of 380 Cozine Street in Brooklyn	Foot Soldier
26	Wole A. Lajide, 45, of Queens.	Foot Soldier
27	Yetunde Peronel, 40, of 2501 Nostrand Avenue in Brooklyn	Foot Soldier

**III. FEMI ENTERPRISE CORRUPTION INDICTMENT (326 counts)
(11 DEFENDANTS)**

The defendants are all charged with enterprise corruption and are variously charged with second-degree criminal possession of a forged instrument, third- and fourth-degree grand larceny, third- and fourth-degree attempted grand larceny, fourth-degree criminal possession of stolen property, petit larceny, attempted petit larceny, and fifth-degree conspiracy. If convicted, they each face up to 25 years in prison.

* indicates that the defendant is presently being sought

** indicates that the defendant is also named in either the Shola Enterprise Corruption or/and Identity Theft Indictments.

	NAME/ADDRESS	ALLEGED ROLE
	** Charles Femi Adoyele (named in Shola E.C. and I.D. Indictments)	Cell Leader
	** Jones Omoyemi Osinowo (named in Shola E.C. and I.D. Indictments)	Cell Manager
	** Adebayo A. Animashaun (named in Shola E.C. and I.D. Indictments)	Supplier
28	Gaberial Goodwin, 41, of 259-51 147 th Drive in Rosedale, Queens	Supplier
29	* Ajibola Williams, 38, of Toronto, Canada	Supplier
30	Olatunde Ashaya, 28, of 6333 North Ridge Avenue in Chicago, Illinois	Supplier
	** Steven Trevor Jackson (named in Shola E.C. and I.D. Indictments)	Forged Document Manufacturer
	** Abimbola Lana (named in Shola E.C. and I.D. Indictments)	Account Preparer
31	John Adewale, 49, of 905 Rutland Road in Brooklyn	Foot Soldier
	** Wole A. Lajide (named in Shola I.D. Indictment)	Foot Soldier
	** Abidemi Olajide (named in Shola E.C. and I.D. Indictments)	Foot Soldier

**IV. FEMI IDENTITY THEFT INDICTMENT (297 counts)
(25 DEFENDANTS)**

Eleven of the defendants are those named in the Femi Enterprise Corruption indictment above. Below is information on the additional 14 defendants.

The defendants are variously charged with first- second- and third-degree identity theft, first- and third-degree attempted identity theft, second- and third-degree unlawful possession of personal identification, third- and fourth-degree grand larceny, third-degree attempted grand larceny, second-degree criminal possession of a forged instrument, fourth-degree criminal possession of stolen property, fifth-degree conspiracy, petit larceny and attempted petit larceny. If convicted, they each face up to seven years in prison.

* indicates that the defendant is presently being sought

** indicates that the defendant is also named in either the Shola Enterprise Corruption or/and Identity Theft Indictments

	NAME/ADDRESS	ALLEGED ROLE
32	Taiwo Adekanbi, 51, of 1035 Clarkson Avenue in Brooklyn	Supplier
33	* Olayiwola Adams, 49, of 2425 Nostrand Avenue in Brooklyn	Supplier
34	Jason Doyle (age and address unavailable)	Supplier

35	Taye Adewale, 41, of Brooklyn	Supplier
36	Israel Adeyomi, 41, of 6544 Belmar Street/Terrace in Philadelphia, PA.	Supplier
	** Kola Falabake (named in Shola E.C. and I.D. Indictments)	Supplier
37	* Kazeem A. Atanda, 39, of 1438 Street Place in Brooklyn	Supplier
38	Haffeez A. Odoffin, 31, of 8948 South Normal Avenue in Chicago, IL	Supplier
39	* Tola Omotayo, 40, of 49 Crown Street in Brooklyn	Supplier
40	Samuel A. Adeoba (age and address unavailable)	Assistant Account Preparer
41	* Yele Kunle Akins (age and address unavailable)	Foot Soldier
	** Yetunde Peronel (named in Shola ID indictment)	Foot Solider
42	Yussuf Amos Oladipo (age and address unavailable)	works for others who used this cell to wash accounts
	** Abiodun A. Shotonwa (named in Shola E.C. and I.D. Indictments)	works for others who used this cell to wash accounts

**V. GANIYU/RAZACK ENTERPRISE CORRUPTION INDICTMENT (92 counts)
(7 DEFENDANTS)**

The defendants are all charged with enterprise corruption and are variously charged with second-degree criminal possession of a forged instrument, third- and fourth-degree grand larceny, fourth- and third-degree attempted grand larceny, fourth-degree criminal possession of stolen property, petit larceny, attempted petit larceny, and fifth-degree conspiracy. If convicted, they each face up to 25 years in prison.

** indicates that the defendant is also named in either the Shola Enterprise Corruption or/and Identity Theft Indictments

	NAME/ADDRESS	ALLEGED ROLE
	** Abdul Razack Yusuf (named in Shola I.D. Indictment)	cell manager
	** Ayanwale Ganiyu (named in Shola E.C. Indictment)	cell manager
43	Richard Nwabuisi, 40, of 525 Ellrose Court, Frederick, MD	supplier
44	Hakeem B. Olokodana (age and address unavailable)	supplier
	** Fidelis Chukwuyem (named in Shola I.D. Indictment)	forged document manufacturer
	** Denis Lenoid (named in Shola I.D. Indictment)	forged document manufacturer
45	Abimbola Akinrindae, 51, of 188-02 64 th Avenue in Queens	account preparer

**VI. GANIYU/RAZACK IDENTITY THEFT INDICTMENT (105 counts)
(9 DEFENDANTS)**

Seven of the individuals are those named in the Ganiyu/Razack Enterprise Corruption indictment above. Below is information on the additional 2 defendants, who are also named in the Shola Identity Theft Indictment.

The defendants are variously charged with first- and second-degree identity theft, first- and third-degree attempted identity theft, third-degree unlawful possession of personal identification, third- and fourth-degree grand larceny, second-degree criminal possession of a forged instrument, fourth-degree criminal possession of stolen property, fifth-degree conspiracy and petit larceny. If convicted, they each face up to seven years in prison.

** indicates that the defendant is also named in either the Shola Enterprise Corruption or/and Identity Theft Indictments

NAME/ADDRESS	ALLEGED ROLE
** Roden Daniels (named in Shola I.D. Indictment)	forged document manufacturer
** Vivian Ike (named in Shola I.D. Indictment)	foot soldier

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