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**California Real Estate Developer Faces Federal Charges for Using Stolen Identities to Obtain COVID-Relief Program Funds**

PORTLAND, Ore.—A federal indictment was unsealed today charging a California real estate developer with using stolen identities to fraudulently obtain more than \$1.5 million in loans intended to help small businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Alfred E. Nevis, 52, of Arroyo Grande, California has been charged with wire fraud, aggravated identity theft, and money laundering.

According to court documents, from April 1, 2020, through at least August 6, 2020, Nevis is alleged to have used the identities of multiple individuals known to him—including current and former employees, business associates, and their spouses—to illegally obtain Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDLs) administered by the Small Business Administration (SBA). The EIDL program was one of several economic relief programs originally authorized by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES). It enabled SBA to issue low-interest loans to small businesses adversely impacted by the pandemic and associated mitigation measures.

To facilitate his scheme, Nevis used the stolen identities to register straw corporations, obtain Employer Identification Numbers (EINs) from the IRS, and submit loan applications to SBA on behalf of the newly-registered corporations. In one instance, Nevis claimed a straw corporation called Isley Farms, registered in Oregon, had 12 employees and generated more than \$725,000 in revenue in a 12-month period ending in January 2020.

Between April 1, 2020 and July 23, 2020, Nevis submitted at least 12 EIDL applications using the identities of at least eight individuals without their knowledge or permission. Together, these applications generated nearly \$1.4 million in fraudulent loan disbursements. SBA approved one final EIDL for \$150,000 in August 2020, bringing Nevis' total fraud proceeds to more than \$1.5 million. Nevis is further alleged to have laundered at least \$160,000 of his ill-gotten gains.

Nevis made his initial appearance in federal court today before U.S. Magistrate Judge Jolie A. Russo. He was arraigned, pleaded not guilty, and released pending a 3-day jury trial scheduled to begin on August 2.

Nevis faces a maximum sentence of 32 years in prison, fines of up to \$500,000, and 3 years' supervised release.

U.S. Attorney Scott Erik Asphaug of the District of Oregon made the announcement.

This case was investigated by the FBI with assistance from the U.S. Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) and the SBA Office of Inspector General. Assistant U.S. Attorney Ryan W. Bounds is prosecuting the case.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act is a federal law, enacted on March 29, 2020, designed to provide emergency financial assistance to the millions of Americans who are suffering the economic effects caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Anyone with information about allegations of attempted fraud involving COVID-19 can report it by calling the Justice Department's National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) Hotline at 866-720-5721 or via the NCDF Web Complaint Form at: <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form>.

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