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PRESS RELEASE

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New York Woman Pleads Guilty to Federal Fraud Charge For Stealing More Than \$130,000 in Two Schemes That Spanned, D.C., Maryland and New York Admits Collecting Fraudulent Unemployment Benefits, As Well as Stealing from Former Employer

WASHINGTON – Sakinah Smith, 26, of New York, N.Y., pled guilty today to a federal charge stemming from a pair of schemes, including one in which she used stolen personal identification information to collect more than \$80,000 in fraudulent unemployment benefits, and another in which she stole more than \$50,000 from a former employer.

The guilty plea was announced by U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr., Valerie Parlave, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI's Washington Field Office; Bill Jones, Special Agent in Charge for the Washington Regional Office of the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Inspector General - Office of Labor Racketeering and Fraud Investigations, and Blanche L. Bruce, Interim Inspector General for the District of Columbia.

Smith pled guilty in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia to one count of wire fraud. The Honorable Senior Judge Thomas F. Hogan scheduled sentencing for Aug. 27, 2014. The charge carries a statutory maximum of 20 years in prison and financial penalties. Under federal sentencing guidelines, the parties have agreed that Smith faces a likely range of 21 to 27 months of incarceration and a fine of up to \$50,000. She also has agreed to make full restitution and to pay an additional \$15,246 as a forfeiture money judgment.

According to a statement of offense filed as part of the guilty plea, Smith created an events planning service in 2009 in Washington, D.C. She created a website for "Saki Mone Events Management" and posted employment advertisements on Craigslist. Potential applicants were asked to provide personal information, including dates of birth and social security numbers.

Smith then used this personal information to fraudulently request unemployment benefits in the names of 17 individual applicants. Between 2009 and 2012, Smith obtained \$80,111 in fraudulent unemployment benefits from the District of Columbia, Maryland and New York. The benefits, in the names of the 17 applicants, were deposited into Smith's own financial accounts.

In a second scheme, Smith admitted that she fraudulently wired about \$52,174 from an employer's bank account to accounts she created for herself. This activity took place from November 2009 through May 2010, while Smith was working for a temporary employment agency in Washington, D.C.

In announcing the plea, U.S. Attorney Machen, Assistant Director in Charge Parlave, Special Agent in Charge Jones, and Interim Inspector General Bruce commended the work of those who investigated the case from the FBI's Washington Field Office, the Labor Department's Inspector General's Office, and the District of Columbia Office of the Inspector General. They also thanked the New York State Department of Labor – Office of Special Investigations; the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation – Division of Unemployment Insurance; the Virginia Employment Commission; the District of Columbia Department of Employment Services, and the Burlington, N.C. Police Department for providing assistance in the investigation.

They acknowledged the efforts of those who handled by the case from the U.S. Attorney's Office, including Paralegal Specialists Donna Galindo and Angela Lawrence, Intelligence Specialist Sharon Johnson, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Diane Lucas, who assisted on forfeiture issues. Finally, they expressed appreciation for the work of Assistant U.S. Attorney Philip A. Selden, who is prosecuting the matter.

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