



U.S. Department of Justice

United States Attorney
Southern District of Florida

99 N.E. 4 Street
Miami, FL 33132

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NEWS RELEASE:

**Ringleader of a Multi-Million Dollar Federal Prison Sentencing Reduction Fraud Scheme
Sentenced to More Than 19 Years in Prison**

Co-Conspirator Sentenced to 8 years

Alvin James Warrick, 40, of Beaumont, Texas, and **Colitha Patrice Bush**, 36, of Port Arthur, Texas were sentenced today in Miami, Florida, by U.S. District Judge Joan Lenard of the Southern District of Florida, to 235 months and 96 months in prison, respectively, with an order for a forfeiture money judgment in the amount of over \$4.4 million to follow. Warrick and Bush previously pled guilty to wire and mail fraud conspiracy charges in connection with a federal prison sentencing scheme that targeted federal inmates and their families in Miami-Dade County and elsewhere by promising them assistance in obtaining a Rule 35 sentencing reduction, in exchange for money.

Rule 35 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure allows the court, upon the government's motion, to reduce a defendant's sentence if the defendant is found to have provided substantial assistance in investigating or prosecuting another person. Neither the government nor the court system charges inmates or their relatives a fee for requesting a sentencing reduction when an inmate provides substantial assistance.

Benjamin G. Greenberg, Acting United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, Robert A. Bourbon, Special Agent in Charge, Department of Justice, Office of the Inspector General (DOJ-OIG), and Perrye K. Turner, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Houston Field Office, made the announcement.

According to court documents, from 2009 through September 7, 2016, Warrick, Bush, Shepherd, and others held themselves out as owners and operators of Private Services, a company that reportedly worked with a network of informants and law enforcement personnel to identify and provide information and third party cooperation that could be credited to federal inmates in Rule 35 proceedings. Using aliases such as "Peter Candlewood," "Diane Lane," and "Diane Rice," the defendants repeatedly targeted federal inmates and their families by phone, text, email, mail, and in-person meetings, during which they promised that they could provide substantial assistance services, which would be used to help secure the early release of the inmates. In return, the defendants required relatives of the federal inmates to make periodic payments via cash, check, wire, Western Union, and MoneyGram, in order for the third party cooperation process to supposedly begin. Overall, more than \$4.4 million was paid to the defendants by at least twenty-two victims, several of whom addressed the Court during Warrick and Bush's sentencing hearing.

As part of the scheme, Warrick and Bush also provided fake invoices and fraudulent documents allegedly showing signed agreements between various U.S. Attorney's Offices, including the Eastern District of New York and the Southern District of New York, and a company affiliated with Private Services. In fact, the agreements were fake, the prosecutors' signatures were forged, and no substantial assistance was ever provided on behalf of these inmates. Instead, Warrick, Bush and Shepherd simply received payments from relatives of federal inmates, and used the fraudulently obtained funds for their personal use and benefit, including the purchase of luxury automobiles, vacations, and gambling activities.

In addition to their sentences for the Southern District of Florida matter (Case No. 16-CR-20698-JAL), Warrick and Bush were also sentenced in a related case originally brought in the Eastern District of Texas, and subsequently transferred to Florida (Case No. 17-CR-20194-JAL). On May 24, 2017, co-conspirator Roland Bennett Shepherd, 32, of Houston, Texas, was also sentenced by U.S. District Judge Joan Lenard of the Southern District of Florida to 28 months' imprisonment, after having previously pled guilty to a single charge of conspiracy to commit mail fraud and wire fraud, in connection with his participation in the multi-year sentencing reduction fraud scheme.

Mr. Greenberg commended the investigative efforts of the DOJ-OIG, the FBI, the Houston Police Department, and the U.S. Attorney's Offices in the Eastern District of New York, Northern District of New York, Southern District of New York, Eastern District of Texas, and Eastern District of Virginia, who provided significant and valuable support to this joint investigation. The Southern District of Florida case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Anne P. McNamara. The Eastern District of Texas case was jointly prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Robert L. Rawls and Anne P. McNamara.

Related court documents and information may be found on the website of the District Court for the Southern District of Florida at www.flsd.uscourts.gov or on <http://pacer.flsd.uscourts.gov>.