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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BEDFORD VA HAS ZERO TOLERANCE FOR ILLEGAL ACTIVITY

BEDFORD, MA- On June 9, former Bedford VA employees were sentenced in federal court for stealing the identities of disabled, combat Veterans living at Bedford VA.

Director, Tammy A. Follensbee said, "Bedford VA has a zero tolerance policy for illegal activity of any kind. Bedford VA Police investigate and seek prosecution of crimes on campus to ensure everyone's safety."

WILFREDO HERNANDEZ, 42 and JESSICA RIVERA, 29, formerly Lowell, were sentenced by U.S. District Judge Edward Harrington. HERNANDEZ was sentenced to one year and a day of incarceration, followed by two years of supervised release. RIVERA was sentenced to six months of home confinement and two years of probation. Both defendants were ordered to pay over \$3,000 in restitution. On March 12, 2010, HERNANDEZ and RIVERA were convicted after a weeklong jury trial of conspiracy to commit identity fraud, access device fraud, and wire fraud, one count of identity fraud, and two counts of access device fraud.

HERNANDEZ was a housekeeping leader and RIVERA a nurse's assistant. The evidence at trial proved that the two stole checks, credit card numbers, and bank account numbers from several disabled combat Veterans who lived at the hospital in the long-term care facility. HERNANDEZ and RIVERA shared the stolen information with GLADYS HERNANDEZ, the mother of WILFREDO HERNANDEZ who previously pled guilty and was sentenced to probation due to her serious health issues. The three defendants purchased in excess of a \$1,000 in goods and services over the telephone and Internet using the Veterans' accounts and identities.

When asked how Ms. Follensbee felt about the ruling yesterday and the impact it would have on Bedford VA she offered, "Honesty, compassion and openness are essential components in the delivery of quality health care. Bedford VA has dedicated, professional and highly ethical staff. This isolated incident does not define Bedford VA staff."

The case was investigated by the Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Inspector General, the United States Secret Service and the Bedford VA Police Department. It was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Anthony E. Fuller of Ortiz's Public Corruption and Special Prosecutions Unit.

"I am very pleased with the investigative results and outcome from the hearing held in Federal Court. John Duffey, chief of police at Bedford VA and his entire department have been invaluable in supporting our zero tolerance policy here at Bedford." said Director Follensbee.

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