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DA Sting Ends with ID Theft Arrests and Seizures

Houston, Tx – An undercover sting has led to arrests, the seizure of 3,000 blank identity cards and the closures of four businesses that allegedly produced fake documents destined for use in ID thefts and fraud, Harris County District Attorney Patricia Lykos announced Monday.

Charges were filed after the conclusion of the two-week joint operation by the Houston Police Department and the Identity Theft Section of the District Attorney's Office. Undercover officers posed as customers at the businesses. They submitted both fictitious and real names of individuals, paid fees, had ID photos taken, and then picked up the finished, bogus ID cards.

Merchandise included fake documents such as Social Security cards and official-looking ID cards from Texas and other states. John Brewer, Chief of the DA's Identity Theft Section, said the equipment and boxes of blank cards were confiscated to keep them out of the hands of ID thieves during this especially vulnerable season for such crimes.

"People have a right to security in their credit and banking transactions," Brewer said. "We want to protect as many citizens as possible from becoming victims of identity theft."

The sting targeted an identification card business at 10893 I-10 West. It was operated by Patrick Mark Desantos, 57. He is charged with the felony offense of Manufacturing a Counterfeit Instrument.

Also charged with that felony are Jasmine Marie Batiste, 21, and Carleton Desmond Batiste, 23. Investigators closed their ID business and two others that had been operating at a flea market at 6116 Windswept in West Houston.

Brewer cautioned consumers to be extra careful in keeping their credit cards and personal identification secure, "especially during this holiday season, when crooks are looking to take advantage any way they can."

To avoid being victimized, merchants need to resist the continuing holiday shopping pressures to rush through non-cash transactions, Brewer said. "Check IDs as often as you can, and as closely as you possibly can," he said. "Don't let these criminals exploit the season."

In the successful sting operation, District Attorney Lykos gave special credit to Assistant District Attorneys Andrew Leuchtman and Ed McClees, and to DA's Investigators Doug Osterberg and Mike Nolan. (end)

