



Department of Justice

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Fourth Person Pleads Guilty to Illegally Accessing Confidential Passport Files

A fourth individual pleaded guilty today to illegally accessing numerous confidential passport application files. William A. Celey, 27, of Washington, D.C., pleaded guilty before U.S. Magistrate Judge Deborah A. Robinson in the District of Columbia to a one-count criminal information charging him with unauthorized computer access.

According to court documents, from August 2003 through July 2004, Celey worked as a contract employee for the State Department as a file assistant. According to plea documents, Celey admitted he had access to official State Department computer databases in the regular course of his employment, including the Passport Information Electronic Records System (PIERS), which contains all imaged passport applications dating back to 1994. The imaged passport applications on PIERS contain, among other things, a photograph of the passport applicant as well as certain personal information including the applicant's full name, date and place of birth, current address, telephone numbers, parent information, spouse's name and emergency contact information. These confidential files are protected by the Privacy Act of 1974, and access by State Department employees is strictly limited to official government duties.

In pleading guilty, Celey admitted that between June 22, 2004, and July 15, 2004, he logged onto the PIERS database and viewed the passport applications of more than 75 celebrities and their families, actors, models, musicians, athletes, record producers, family members, a politician and other individuals identified in the press. Celey admitted that he had no official government reason to access and view these passport applications, but that his sole purpose in accessing and viewing these passport applications was idle curiosity.

Celey is the fourth current or former State Department employee to plead guilty in this continuing investigation. On Sept. 22, 2008, Lawrence C. Yontz, a former Foreign Service Officer and intelligence analyst, pleaded guilty to unlawfully accessing nearly 200 confidential passport files. Yontz was sentenced on Dec. 19, 2008, to 12 months of probation and ordered to perform 50 hours of community service. On Jan. 14, 2009, Dwayne F. Cross, a former administrative assistant and contract specialist, pleaded guilty to unlawfully accessing more than 150 confidential passport files. On March 23, 2009, Cross was sentenced to 12 months of probation and ordered to perform 100 hours of community service. On Jan. 27, 2009, Gerald R. Lueders, a former Foreign Service Officer, watch officer and recruitment coordinator, pleaded guilty to unlawfully accessing more than 50 confidential passport files. Lueders was sentenced on July 8, 2009, to one year of probation and ordered to pay a \$5,000 fine. Celey is scheduled to be sentenced on Oct. 23, 2009.

These cases are being prosecuted by Trial Attorney Armando O. Bonilla of the Criminal Division's Public Integrity Section, headed by Section Chief William M. Welch II. The cases are being investigated by the State Department Office of Inspector General.

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