



Department of Justice

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District of Massachusetts

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FUGITIVE CHARGED WITH INTERNET FRAUD SCHEME

Government seeks assistance in locating fugitive defendant

BOSTON - A federal indictment was unsealed late yesterday charging a former Boston resident with fraudulently offering real estate loans over the Internet, then failing to make the loans or refund the application fees. The defendant, Sonata Bastien a/k/a Sean Chase, 30, is currently a fugitive from justice.

Bastien is an African-American, with black hair and brown eyes, about 5'5" tall and approximately 150 pounds. She was born a female with the birth name of Sonata Bastien, but may be living as a transgendered male under the name Sean Chase. Bastien/Chase was last believed to be residing in the New York or New Jersey area. Pictures of Bastien/Chase are below, but note that different people can look alike, and these pictures may not accurately represent how she currently appears.

The indictment alleges that from September 2004 through June 2009, Bastien/Chase advertised loans to be provided by companies known as Lantzy Financial Consulting, Light Docs, Birchmere Mortgage, Lognar Mortgage, and Nileland Mortgage. According to the indictment, each entity operated a corresponding website that offered real estate loans and required an up-front fee or series of fees advertised as refundable. The entities listed bogus mailing addresses on their websites, but in later communications with victims, they asked the victims to send their money to a real address in Boston at which Bastien had lived and from which she continued to collect mail for the scheme. The charges allege that the entities failed to make the loans or refund the fees. Instead, the victims' fees went into one of the 18 bank accounts that Bastien controlled, and were spent on expenses to perpetuate the fraud and personal expenses, such as purchases at Guitar Center, Target, a gas station, Gold's Gym and Dunkin' Donuts.

In February 2011, Bastien/Chase was charged with seven counts of mail fraud for participating in the scheme. If convicted on these charges, Bastien/Chase faces up to 20 years in prison on each count, to be followed by three years of supervised release, restitution, forfeiture and a fine of \$250,000 or twice the gain or loss, whichever is highest.

Citizens with information about Bastien's whereabouts should not attempt to apprehend her themselves, but are being asked to call the U.S. Postal Inspection Service at 1-877-876-2455 and select Option 2.



United States Attorney Carmen M. Ortiz; Robert Bethel, Inspector in Charge of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service; and William P. Offord, Special Agent in Charge of the Internal Revenue Service's Criminal Investigation in Boston made the announced today. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Scott L. Garland and Amy Harman Burkart of Ortiz's Cybercrimes Unit.

The details contained in the Indictment are allegations. The defendant is presumed to be innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

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