

News Release

13 June 2011

Man Pleads Guilty to Faking Own Death

A man has today (Monday 13 June) pleaded guilty to faking his own death in Honduras to claim insurance benefits and claiming pensions relating to another person.

Anthony McErlean, aged 66, of Swarling Hill Road, Petham, Canterbury, had been charged with fraudulently making a claim to ACE European insurance to claim death benefit of £520,000, fraudulently obtaining a passport and two counts of theft in claiming pensions. McErlean claimed pensions of £40,658 from the Department of Work and Pensions, and £27,000 from the Port of London Authority.

McErlean has been remanded in custody at the hearing held at Canterbury Crown Court, until sentencing which has been adjourned until the week commencing 18 July.

Between 5 December 2009 and 31 May 2010, McErlean made a false representation, by pretending to be his wife, claiming he had died in a road traffic collision in Honduras on 6 December 2009. He had claimed he had been struck by a produce truck and died from his injuries.

McErlean was charged with this fraudulent claim offence on 16 March 2011. He was given strict bail conditions, including not leaving or attempting to leave the UK at any time and not to apply for any travel documents for any reason.

On 17 March 2011, McErlean applied for a new passport claiming he had lost his last one. This in fact had been seized by police. A new passport was issued on 21 March 2011 and sent to a courier in order for it to be delivered.

Officers from the Serious and Economic Crime Unit at Kent Police, through their investigation, intercepted the new passport and McErlean was re-arrested on 28 March on the M6 in Staffordshire. He has since been remanded in custody and further charges were put to him - fraudulently obtaining a passport and two counts of theft.

McErlean had produced a faked witness statement which stated that on changing a wheel on the car he was travelling in, he was struck by a produce truck. The invented 'witness' who said he was travelling with McErlean to take some rural wildlife photos, said a truck full of farm workers took the body to Santa Rosa De Aguan, a small village, where local people took care of the body.

Kent Police's investigation team were alerted to the fraudulent activity by the Insurance Fraud Bureau who had been contacted by ACE European insurance company, suspicious of the claim McErlean was making. Officers from Kent Police's SECU arrested McErlean and found him in possession of a credit card in the name of Green.

Officers discovered McErlean not only faked his own death to claim from an insurance company, but had been claiming pensions relating to his father in law from a previous marriage, who had died in March 2007.

Glen Marr, Director of the Insurance Fraud Bureau: 'The insurance industry takes all form of insurance fraud very seriously. This shows the positive results that can be achieved by the insurance industry and law enforcement working in unison.'

'Our industry is no longer an easy target for these criminals and we are determined to protect our genuine customers.'

'Can I urge anyone with information on any type of insurance fraud to call our free confidential hotline on 0800 328 2550 or online at www.insurancefraudbureau.org/report.'

Editors notes:

ACE European Insurance Company had not paid out on McErlean's claim.

An image will not be released until sentencing in line with image release guidelines.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

The Insurance Fraud Bureau (IFB)

The Insurance Fraud Bureau (IFB) launched on July 26th 2006 and has been formed to provide a cost effective, tactical solution for the detection and prevention of organised, cross industry fraud, supporting the wider Association of British Insurers industry fraud strategy. The IFB leads or co-ordinates the industry response to the identification of criminal fraud networks and works closely with the Police and law enforcement agencies. www.insurancefraudbureau.org, www.twitter.com/theifb

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