

## News Release

30<sup>th</sup> September 2011

### **Man Who Faked His Own Death Sentenced To Six Years**

A man has today (30 September 2011) been sentenced at Canterbury Crown Court to six years imprisonment for fraud offences.

Anthony McErlean, aged 66, of Swarling Hill Road, Petham, Canterbury had faked his own death in Honduras to claim insurance benefits and was 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 pleaded guilty at an earlier hearing on 13 June 2011 and was held on remand until today's sentencing.

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 of the joint Kent and Essex Serious Crime Directorate, through their investigation, intercepted the new passport and McErlean was re-arrested on 28 March on the M6 in Staffordshire. He was then 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.

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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.

Martin Bradbeer, the investigating officer, from Kent Police's Serious Economic Crime Unit said: '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.

'Kent Police investigates all kinds of fraud which can be complex and lengthy cases. McErlean had gone to a great deal of trouble to make illegal financial gain. Anyone committing offences of this type will be brought before the courts.'

Glen Marr, Director of the IFB said "The insurance industry does not and will not tolerate fraud.

Insurers routinely deploy a range of tools and tactics to combat fraud. In this instance the significant pool of industry data coupled with analytical software deployed by the IFB, played a part in the fraud being detected.

Anyone with the inclination to defraud an insurer should take stock and recognise there is an ever increasing prospect they will be detected, with personal consequences, as this case reinforces.

The intolerance to insurance fraud is shared by consumers, with record numbers of reports of fraud being made to the industry fraud Cheatline managed by the IFB.

For anyone with suspicions or knowledge regarding any type of insurance fraud, to include fraudulent death claims, information can be shared in strictest confidence and anonymously if necessary with the IFB. Reports can be made by calling Freephone 0800 328 2550, or by reporting on-line <http://www.insurancefraudbureau.org/report/>

Thank you to Kent Police for their support and assistance on this matter, and particularly for their speed of response".

**-ENDS-**

**Editors notes:**

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

Attached to this release are images of Anthony McErlean, the fake death certificate and the fake witness account.

More follows.....

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**About the IFB:**

The IFB launched on July 26 2006 and was 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](http://www.insurancefraudbureau.org) [twitter.com/theifb](https://twitter.com/theifb)

**The IFB currently has 29 active joint Police operations spread across 17 Police forces, with the combined value of the fraud involved being approximately £59.5 million. Since its formation in July 2006, the IFB has been instrumental in helping the Police make over 486 arrests of people concerned with organised insurance fraud, resulting in 119 convictions and terms of imprisonment handed down by courts for finalised criminal prosecutions. Additionally, proceedings are taking place to liquidate the assets of criminals who have been defrauding insurers.**

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