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## NEWS RELEASE

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### Operation Exhort – ‘Crash For Cash’ Gang Sentenced

A ground-breaking investigation into a criminal syndicate that organised a ‘crash for cash’ car insurance scam by staging road traffic collisions then submitting false insurance claims concluded at Luton Crown Court today (Wednesday 27 April) with the last three remaining defendants being sentenced to a total of 11 years.

A five year investigation, codenamed Operation Exhort, was conducted by Bedfordshire Police. The inquiry focused on in excess of 180 accidents that were dealt with by Swift Accident Management, the accident management company at the heart of the fraud, of which 230 individual claims were made by drivers or passengers. Sixty of those accidents were looked at by the force, 46 of which were fully investigated resulting in the last 21 claims being presented in evidence at the last trial that concluded two weeks ago.

The defendants were sentenced to the following jail terms; Kamsan ‘Kimmy’ Mahmood, 43, of Lincoln Road, Luton to five years (4.5 years for the conspiracy and 6 months for a previously tried indictment of mortgage fraud); Istafa Hussain, 35, of Lincoln Road, Luton to four and a half years years; and Peter Charlery, 45, of Carol Close, Luton, to 18 months. All three were found guilty of conspiracy to defraud two weeks ago.

A total of 38 defendants appeared at crown court at separate hearings over a period of three years. The investigation by a small dedicated team of detectives represents one of the largest fraud rings the industry has ever seen. The earlier court proceedings could not be published for legal reasons until now.

Two of those other defendants who could not be previously identified were; Saraj Qazi, 30, of Westbourne Road, Luton who was convicted of Conspiracy to Defraud, ‘Cash for Crash’ and Mortgage Fraud for which he was given a five year sentence; and Majid Hussain, 33, of Wychwood Avenue, Luton. He was convicted of Conspiracy to Defraud, ‘Cash for Crash’ and mortgage fraud for which he was sentenced to a total of five and a half years.

The entire investigation resulted in 33 defendants pleading guilty to a variety of offences in connection with the £5.3 million insurance and mortgage fraud. The remaining five pleaded not guilty at two separate trials – four have been convicted and one acquitted. A further eight people were cautioned for their involvement in the crime.

More follows...



The impact of the investigation by Bedfordshire Police and industry partner, the Insurance Fraud Bureau, has been huge and uncovered a web of deceit involving people from a number of professions from the legal, medical and motor trade.

"In 2006 Luton was a known hotspot for offences, also known as 'cash for crash', but in 2011 that is no longer the case," said Andrew Richer, Senior Investigating Officer and Assistant Chief Constable of Bedfordshire Police.

"False details about the accidents were provided to insurance companies and bogus documents were created. Some vehicles were deliberately damaged in order to support the claims, which were made in respect of damage to the vehicles, personal injuries, recovery costs, hire vehicles, legal costs and loss of earnings."

CPS Thames and Chiltern prosecutor, Frances Bush, from the Bedfordshire branch, said: "Many of the 37 offenders involved in the 'cash for crash' and mortgage fraud were supposedly respectable people who thought they were above the law, and that they could make vast sums of money through this criminal activity and get away with it.

The evidence was strong and this fact led to the majority of the defendants pleading guilty, whilst the jury convicted four of the remaining defendants. All the offenders have now been sentenced accordingly by the courts for their crimes.

The police and CPS will robustly investigate and prosecute fraudsters and their money and assets will be seized under the Proceeds of Crime Act to ensure that they do not benefit from their crimes. Crime doesn't pay!"

Glen Marr, Director, IFB added: "The insurance industry does not and will not tolerate fraud. It has an impact on the cost of insurance for genuine consumers and the industry is committed to rooting out and bringing to justice, those criminals who target insurers. This operation further reinforces the risks fraudsters face when seeking to deceive insurers and the personal consequences of their actions. We would also like to encourage anyone with any information concerning those who are organising insurance fraud, to contact us through our confidential Cheatline on **0800 328 2550**".

Ends

- Note To Editors:

During the investigation Bedfordshire Police worked with the Insurance Fraud Bureau. The IFB was launched in July 2006, to clamp down on organised, cross-industry insurance fraud in order to protect honest policyholders. Criminal gangs organising complex scams are earning up to £4 million a week from organised insurance fraud and frequently use the proceeds to fund other forms of criminality.

Via the IFB, the insurance industry is working collaboratively to detect and expose these criminal gangs; 97% of the UK's personal lines insurers are participants in the IFB service. The Bureau analyses the details of insurance policies and claims records of all insurer members to identify suspicious activity. It then leads or co-ordinates investigations with the effected insurers and police to expose fraudsters and bring them to justice, recovering fraudulent monies paid out and seeking criminal prosecution.

The IFB runs a free and confidential Cheatline for anyone with information on any type of insurance fraud, or who fears they may have been a victim of crash for cash. Please call our free confidential

**Cheatline on 0800 328 2550** or for further information visit [www.insurancefraudbureau.org](http://www.insurancefraudbureau.org). For further media enquiries about the IFB please contact Anne Staunton or Nicky Godfrey at Peak Marketing and Communication Services Ltd on 020 8661 2444 or email [anne.staunton@peak-marketing.co.uk](mailto:anne.staunton@peak-marketing.co.uk) / [nicky.godfrey@peak-marketing.co.uk](mailto:nicky.godfrey@peak-marketing.co.uk)  
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