



# PRESS RELEASE

## Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation *Chief Richard Weber*

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IRS – Criminal Investigation

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### **California Man Charged in Mass Mailing Scam Aimed at Holders of U.S. Trademarks**

A California man was indicted today for his role in a mass mailing scam targeting holders of U.S. trademarks.

Assistant Attorney General Leslie R. Caldwell of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, U.S. Attorney Eileen M. Decker of the Central District of California, Inspector in Charge Robert Wemyss of the United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) Los Angeles Division, Inspector in Charge David G. Bowers of the USPIS Washington Division and Special Agent in Charge Erick Martinez of the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation (IRS-CI) Los Angeles Field Office made the announcement.

Artashes Darbinyan, 35, of Glendale, California, was charged in the Central District of California with 12 counts of mail fraud and four counts of aggravated identity theft. His arraignment is scheduled for Oct. 19, 2015.

According to the indictment, from September 2013 through September 2015, Darbinyan operated and controlled the Trademark Compliance Center (TCC) (aka Trademark Compliance Office (TCO)), which purported to offer trademark registration and monitoring services. The indictment alleges that, through TCC and TCO, Darbinyan sent mass solicitations to holders of trademarks recently registered with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office offering, for a fee, to register the holders' trademarks with U.S. Customs and Border Protection, which uses an Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) recordation database to screen and block imports of infringing products, and to send users of its service regular reports of potentially confusing or infringing marks. According to the indictment, Darbinyan did not intend to, and did not, provide the promised services.

The indictment alleges that, to perpetuate the scheme and to avoid detection Darbinyan used the names of other persons to open accounts for TCC and TCO at "virtual office centers" (i.e., businesses that offered call answering and mail forwarding services) in the Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles areas, and directed employees of the Washington, D.C.-area virtual office centers to forward to the virtual office centers in the Los Angeles area mail addressed to TCC and TCO. According to the allegations in the indictment, these forwarded envelopes contained payments from trademark holders for the aforementioned trademark registration and monitoring services, which Darbinyan retrieved and deposited into bank accounts that he controlled.

The charges and allegations in the indictment are merely accusations, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

The case was investigated by the USPIS and IRS-CI. The case is being prosecuted by Trial Attorney William E. Johnston of the Criminal Division's Fraud Section.

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