



**U.S. Department of Justice**

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**BOSS OF FRAUDULENT IDENTIFICATION DOCUMENT RING BASED IN  
CHICAGO'S CHINATOWN SENTENCED TO 81 MONTHS IN FEDERAL PRISON**

CHICAGO — The leader of an identification document fraud ring that was based in Chicago's Chinatown neighborhood for more than 10 years was sentenced today to nearly seven years in federal prison. The defendant, **Jun Yun Zhang**, was the boss of an extensive conspiracy and enjoyed most of the profit from an illegal business that provided more than 7,000 customers with fraudulent documents and assisted thousands of them obtain genuine identification cards and driver's licenses, in alias identities, from the Illinois Secretary of State's office. As part of the illegal business, Zhang sold customers a genuine Social Security card (issued to a third party) and a matching manufactured Chinese passport. Zhang and his workers also paid more than 200 bribes to Secretary of State employees to pass customers, who were often unqualified, on the road test for an Illinois driver's license, while teaching other customers how to cheat on the state's written driving test. Four former Secretary of State employees were among 35 defendants who were charged federally as a result of *Operation Paper Mountain*, an undercover investigation by the FBI and the Chicago Police Department, which became public in February 2009 when Zhang and others were arrested.

Zhang, 44, a Chinese national who has been in custody since 2009, previously pleaded guilty to passport fraud and aggravated identity theft and was sentenced today to 81 months in prison by U.S. District Judge John Darrah. The judge imposed a mandatory two-year sentence on the identity theft count, which must be served consecutively to the 57 months he ordered on the fraud count.

Zhang's brother, **Jun Yue Zhang**, 52, was sentenced yesterday to 61 months in prison by Judge Darrah. The Zhang brothers and 13 other defendants, including other relatives, were charged together in one case before Judge Darrah, with 13 of the 15 pleading guilty. The remaining two defendants are fugitives. One co-defendant, **James Howell**, a former employee at the Secretary of State licensing facility in Bridgeview, was sentenced previously to two years in prison after he pleaded guilty and cooperated in the investigation.

Twenty additional defendants were charged later in related cases. Of the 35 total defendants, 21 have pleaded guilty, four are fugitives, and charges against 10 others remain pending.

During the decade-long conspiracy, thousands of Illinois driver's licenses and identification cards were issued to individuals using Social Security account numbers with the 586 prefix, which was unusual because it is assigned to individuals in American Samoa, Guam, the Philippines and Saipan. In several decades before 2000, the state issued only several hundred driver's licenses and identification cards to individuals using the 586 Social Security account prefix. The spike was due, in large part, to the illegal document mill operated by Jun Yun Zhang and others.

Jun Yun Zhang and other manufacturers, brokers and couriers sold fraudulent "identity sets" – ranging in price from \$1,200 to \$3,500 per set – to predominantly Chinese, Korean and Indonesian nationals who were smuggled into or were in the United States illegally. The false documents included a counterfeit or altered authentic Chinese passport that was matched to a legitimate Social

Security number usually beginning with 586, many of which were originally obtained legitimately by Chinese nationals working temporarily in Saipan. While in Saipan or after these workers returned to China, the Social Security cards were collected and transported to the United States, where they wound up in the possession of the defendants and others. Using the bogus passports containing customers' actual photos, coupled with a legitimate Social Security number and fabricated proof of residency such as a utility bill, the defendants often accompanied customers to various Secretary of State facilities in the Chicago area and assisted them in fraudulently obtaining an authentic Illinois driver's license or identification card that matched the alias identity on the passport and Social Security card. After obtaining a set of fraudulent documents, customers who were in the country illegally could use them to obtain employment, housing, utility services, credit cards and bank accounts.

Today's sentence was announced by Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, and Robert D. Grant, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Office of the FBI. The Chicago Police Department was instrumental in the investigation, which was also assisted by the Illinois Secretary of State Inspector General and the Cook County State's Attorney's Office.

The government is being represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Steven J. Dollear, Matthew Madden and Yasmin Best.

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