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Attorney General Steve Marshall Announces Sentencing of Former ALEA Narcotics Officer for Computer Tampering and Ethics Charges

(MONTGOMERY)--Attorney General Steve Marshall today announced the sentencing of a former Alabama Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA) officer to serve 60 days in jail for 13 charges, including 12 counts of computer tampering and an ethics charge of using his public position for personal gain. Steven Wrea Ziaja, 40, pleaded guilty to misdemeanor charges on October 22 and was sentenced by Montgomery County Circuit Judge James Anderson.

Judge Anderson sentenced Ziaja to 12 months, split to serve 60 days in jail, on all counts. This will be followed by a term of probation for three months or until all conditions of his sentence are completed, including payment of fines, court costs and fees. As a part of his plea agreement, Ziaja will forfeit his certification as a law enforcement officer and will be forever barred from serving as a law enforcement officer in Alabama in the future.

Without notifying his supervisors at ALEA, Ziaja began selling cars for a Morgan County car lot in 2014 and invested in its parent organization, Priceville Partners. When purchasers failed to make payments on cars purchased from the lot, Ziaja used the Law Enforcement Tactical System (LETS) search feature to obtain information on purchasers, including information about purchasers' family members, so that the repossessioners could more easily find the purchasers' cars. Ziaja used the computer search information, which is legally restricted to criminal justice purposes, to assist with the private business's repossessions in Morgan and Jefferson counties, either by running the searches himself or by disseminating search information run by another person.

"Mr. Ziaja misused his law enforcement position for personal gain and therefore betrayed the public's trust," said Attorney General Marshall.

Attorney General Marshall thanked ALEA for its investigative assistance in this case. He commended Assistant Attorney General Peggy Rossmann and Special Agents of the Attorney General's Special Prosecutions Division for their outstanding work to achieve this conviction.

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