St. Mary's Co residents charged with stealing $820,000 in V.A. benefits

Posted by Cyn On 09/20/2019

Leonardtown, MD -- Three people are accused of stealing $820,000 in V.A. benefits as part of a benefits fraud scheme.

According to an indictment, Angela Marie Farr, 33, of Leonardtown organized of a conspiracy in which she submitted false and fraudulent documents to the Department of Veterans Affairs ("VA") claiming that her then-husband, Michael Pace,39, also of Leonardtown, and her father, (who is listed as Individual 1 in the indictment) were homebound and required full-time assistance and disability compensation. However, during the period he was purportedly disabled Pace raised his three children and regularly exercised at a local CrossFit gym.

Farr's mother, Mary Biggs, 62, of Lexington Park, conspired with Farr to file fraudulent documents on behalf of Individual 1. Farr exaggerated Individual 1's disabilities to the point the VA determined that Individual 1 could not handle his own finances and appointed Biggs as Individual 1's fiduciary. Despite these claims, Individual 1 was healthy enough to be employed as a division head at the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division in Patuxent River, Maryland.

Farr was herself a Navy veteran, serving from August 2, 2005 to April 19, 2007.

 On October 6, 2009, Farr received a service-connected disability rating of 70% based on fraudulent documentation she submitted, which purported that she suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder from an incident in which she was raped by another serviceman.

Farr admitted to local law enforcement to fabricating the incident. Farr also claimed to the VA that she suffered a traumatic brain injury from an on-duty car accident, which was also determined to be a fabrication.

Ultimately, the VA increased Farr's service-connected disability rating to 100% based on additional fraudulent documentation she submitted. As a result, Farr received approximately $390,000 from the VA to which she was not entitled. During the period she claimed to be disabled, Farr operated a social media marketing company based in Leonardtown.

Farr is also charged with stealing the identity of a physician identified in the indictment as "Doctor 1" when she submitted forged documents to the VA purportedly authored by that physician. Farr is also charged with social security fraud for fraudulently receiving $35,000 in Social Security Disability Insurance benefits for her claimed disabilities.

Farr's former husband, Michael Vincent Pace was a member of the United States Army from August 30, 2001, to February 2, 2002, and from January 4, 2005, to June 2, 2006, as well as the United States Army National Guard from May 22, 2007, to October 28, 2007.

Pace and Farr were married from 2008 until they divorced on December 5, 2017. Pace was deemed to be 100% disabled by the VA, based on fraudulent medical documentation submitted to the VA. Despite claiming to be profoundly disabled, Pace also received a Caregiver Assistance stipend from the VA exceeding $2,500 per month for purportedly caring for Farr. As a result, Pace received approximately $274,000 from the VA to which he was not entitled.

Farr's father, named as Individual 1, was a member of the United States Navy from January 29, 1974, to January 31, 1997. Individual 1 received a 100% service-connected disability rating by the VA based on fraudulent documentation Farr and Biggs submitted on his behalf.

As a result, Biggs and Individual 1 received approximately $156,000 in disability compensation and SMC to which they were not entitled. Biggs conspired with Farr to hide from the VA the fact that Individual 1 was capable of working, and was in fact actively employed.

Farr, Pace, and Biggs with conspiracy and theft of government property. Farr was also charged with aggravated identity theft and social security fraud.

If convicted, Farr faces a mandatory minimum of 2 years in federal prison and a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison; Biggs and Pace face a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison.