

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 11, 2018

## **Post Office Employee Sentenced in Mail Theft Scheme**

Erie County District Attorney John J. Flynn announces that Jeffrey Watkins, Jr., 29, of Buffalo has been sentenced by State Supreme Court Justice John L. Michalski to 6 months in jail followed by five years' probation. He was also ordered to repay \$ 31,114.43 in restitution upon his release.

Watkins and his two co-defendants pleaded guilty to various charges in July 2018 for their involvement in cashing checks that were stolen from mailboxes in the areas of Walden Avenue, Pine Ridge Road and Genesee Street in the Town of Cheektowaga.

Jeffrey Watkins, Jr., 29, of Buffalo pleaded guilty to two counts of Identity Theft in the First Degree, two counts of Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Second Degree, one count of Scheme to Defraud in the First Degree and one count of Official Misconduct.

The defendant admitted that while working as a United States Postal worker, he stole checks from the mailboxes of others between November 1, 2017 and May 25, 2018. He further admitted that he and two co-defendants deposited those checks into multiple bank accounts to withdraw funds for their personal use.

The second defendant, Jeffrey Watkins, Sr., 57, of Buffalo pleaded guilty to two counts of Identity Theft in the First Degree, two counts of Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Second Degree and one count of Scheme to Defraud in the First Degree.

The defendant admitted that between November 1, 2017 and May 25, 2018, he forged signatures and used the identity of others to deposit checks that had been stolen from mailboxes. The money was then withdrawn and spent for personal use.

Watkins, Sr. received an indeterminate sentence of one to three years in state prison for his role in the crime. He was also ordered to repay \$26,371.50 in restitution upon his release.

The third defendant, Andrea DeBerry, 37, of Buffalo pleaded guilty to one count of Scheme to Defraud. She also admitted that between November 1, 2017 and May 25, 2018, she and the two co-defendants deposited stolen checks in their bank accounts, and withdrew the money for personal use.

DeBerry was sentenced to five years' probation.

DA Flynn commends the investigative work of Cheektowaga Police Detective Christopher Chojnacki, Town of Tonawanda Police Detective Mike Mulla and Special Agent Daniel Batt of the United State Postal Service Office of the Inspector General.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Gary M. Ertel of the DA's Special Investigations and Prosecutions Bureau.

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