

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Northern District of Georgia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 18, 2018

Fifteen defendants sentenced in stolen U.S. Treasury check ring

ATLANTA - Fifteen defendants have been sentenced for their part in a ring that stole over \$10 million in U.S. Treasury checks from the mail and then cashed them at Walmart and Kroger stores around the country using fake identifications. The sentences ranged from two to ten years in prison for members of the ring.

“This sentencing marks a success for our multi-agency Stolen Treasury Check Task Force, which targets the widespread problem of U.S. Treasury check thefts in Georgia,” said U.S. Attorney Byung J. “BJay” Pak. “Criminals who steal Treasury checks victimize senior citizens, the disabled, veterans, and hard-working taxpayers who have earned these funds and depend on them. As this case shows, we will pursue these theft rings and hold them accountable regardless of how far away they go to cash the checks and avoid detection.”

“The success of this investigation can be directly attributed to the federal agencies that partnered with the Secret Service to bring this ring to justice,” said Special Agent in Charge Kimberly A. Cheatle, U.S. Secret Service, Atlanta Field Office. “It is immensely gratifying to see those who prey on the vulnerable prosecuted and sentenced for their crimes.”

“The collaborative investigative efforts by the Stolen Treasury Check Task Force resulted in the disruption of a criminal group engaged in an illegal financial scheme,” said David M. McGinnis, U.S. Postal Inspector in Charge of the Charlotte Division. “Criminals should take note that Postal Inspectors along with our law enforcement partners will vigorously pursue and bring to justice anyone who commits a crime against the U. S. mail system.”

“This check-theft scheme affected numerous innocent citizens, including Social Security beneficiaries, who have rightly earned government payments,” said SSA OIG Atlanta Field Division Acting Special Agent-in-Charge Gregory Wiggs. “We will continue to work with our law enforcement

partners on similar investigations, and we thank the U.S. Attorney's Office for prosecuting this significant case."

"This case demonstrates our office's commitment to protecting federal inmates, who were among the victims in this case, from fraudulent check schemes. We thank and commend our law enforcement partners who worked tirelessly with us to ensure a successful result for the Stolen Treasury Check Task Force," said Robert A. Bourbon, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General's Miami Field Office.

"The United States Postal Service Office of Inspector General takes allegations of mail theft seriously and vigorously investigates these matters to protect the overall integrity of the Postal Service," said Special Agent in Charge Imari R. Niles.

According to U.S. Attorney Pak, the charges and other information presented in court: Maurice Shuler and Milton Minter received stolen U.S. Treasury checks that were taken from the U.S. Mail before reaching their intended recipients. The checks included tax refund, Social Security, and veterans checks. After receiving the checks, Shuler and Minter provided them to a network of check cashers who negotiated the stolen checks, mainly at Walmart and Kroger stores. The defendants used fake driver's licenses to pose as the check payees and forged the payees' names on the back of the checks. They also used other individuals' Social Security numbers to cash the checks.

In an effort to avoid detection, the defendants traveled to different states, including Alabama, Mississippi, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Kentucky, Iowa, Louisiana, and Tennessee, to cash the stolen checks. Over the span of four years, the ring was responsible for cashing over 6,000 stolen U.S. Treasury checks worth over \$10 million.

Fifteen defendants have been sentenced as part of this case. U.S. District Judge Timothy C. Batten, Sr. sentenced the following individuals:

- Maurice Shuler, a/k/a Fred, 29, of Atlanta, Georgia, was sentenced to seven years in prison to be followed by three years of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$9.5 million in restitution.
- Sepater Ransom, 31, of Atlanta, Georgia, was sentenced to five years and one month in prison to be followed by three years of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$550,000 in restitution.
- Angela L. Williams, 43, of Lithonia, Georgia, was sentenced to time served (she has served four years and 20 days), three years of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$116,053.58 in restitution. Williams has been in custody since November 28, 2014 on related charges in Mississippi.

Judge Batten previously sentenced the following 12 defendants:

- Milton Minter, a/k/a White Boi, 34, of Riverdale, Georgia, was sentenced to ten years in prison to be followed by three years of supervised release, and ordered to pay a \$75,000 fine.
- Chucky Ransom, 45, of Blakely, Georgia, was sentenced to seven years in prison to be followed by three years of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$550,000 in restitution.
- Damondra Ransom, a/k/a Pop, 24, of Blakely, Georgia, was sentenced to two years and one day in prison to be followed by three years of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$45,912.96 in restitution.
- Brian K. Hightower, a/k/a Big, 37, of Stockbridge, Georgia, was sentenced to two years and one day in prison to be followed by three years of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$116,053.58 in restitution. Hightower was also sentenced to prison in Mississippi on related state charges.
- Charles E. Bolton, Jr., a/k/a Lightpole Jones, 29, of Atlanta, Georgia, was sentenced to two years and eighteen days in prison to be followed by three years of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$212,683.51 in restitution. Bolton was also sentenced to prison in Mississippi on related state charges.
- Mariah C. Clark, 28, of Loganville, Georgia, was sentenced to two years and seven months in prison to be followed by three years of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$208,423.51 in restitution.
- Lovely Richardson, 31, of Union City, Georgia, was sentenced to two years in prison to be followed by one year of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$1,420 in restitution.
- Osiris O. Hernandez, 27, of Atlanta, Georgia, was sentenced to four years in prison to be followed by two years of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$2,072 in restitution.
- Kimbela Jordan, 23, of Kankakee, Illinois, was sentenced to two years and six months in prison to be followed by three years of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$35,040.15 in restitution.
- Raymon D. Gales, 29, of Atlanta, Georgia, was sentenced to four years in prison to be followed by three years of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$207,392.36 in restitution.
- Jeremy Arnold, 32, of Riverdale, Georgia, was sentenced to two years and two months in prison to be followed by three years of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$36,940.70 in restitution.
- Rodrekus R. Harris, 29, of Blakely, Georgia, was sentenced to two years and two months in prison to be followed by three years of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$56,779.59 in restitution.

The remaining defendant, Gino Shuler, 31, of Atlanta, Georgia, is scheduled to be sentenced on January 9, 2018, before Judge Batten.

These sixteen defendants were previously charged in an 83-count indictment with conspiracy, theft of government money, and aggravated identity theft. All of the defendants were convicted after pleading guilty to one or more counts of the indictment.

This case was investigated by the U.S. Secret Service; U.S. Postal Inspection Service; Social Security Administration, Office of the Inspector General; Department of Justice, Office of the Inspector General; and United States Postal Service, Office of the Inspector General.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephen H. McClain, Chief of the Complex Frauds Section, and former Assistant U.S. Attorney Christopher C. Bly prosecuted the case.

###