

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
District of New Jersey

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Essex County Man Sentenced to 33 Months in Prison for Conspiring to Steal Mail and Commit Bank Fraud

NEWARK, N.J. – An Essex County, New Jersey, man was sentenced today to 33 months in prison for his role in a conspiracy to steal check books and credit cards from the postal system, Acting U.S. Attorney Rachael A. Honig announced.

Tashon Ragan, aka “Ta,” 21, of Newark, previously pleaded guilty by videoconference before U.S. District Judge Susan D. Wigenton to an information charging him with one count of conspiracy to commit bank fraud. Judge Wigenton imposed the sentence by videoconference.

Three of Ragan’s conspirators, Jeffrey Bennett, 27, of Irvington, New Jersey, and Jahaad Flip, 22, and Janel Blackman, 42, both of Newark, pleaded guilty before Judge Wigenton earlier this year to conspiracy to commit bank fraud and are awaiting sentencing. Blackman also pleaded guilty to filing fraudulent applications with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) for Economic Injury Disaster Loans.

According to documents filed in this case and statements made in court:

From February 2019 to May 2020, Ragan conspired to fraudulently obtain money from victim financial institutions by depositing counterfeit checks and checks stolen from the mail into accounts at victim financial institutions and withdrawing funds from those accounts before the fraudulent checks were identified and further withdrawals were blocked. Ragan and his conspirators arranged for USPS employees to steal credit cards and blank check books from the mail in exchange for cash payments. USPS employees provided the checks to Ragan and his conspirators. Ragan and his conspirators forged the signatures of the accountholders and negotiated the checks by making them payable to individuals, some of whom were New Jersey high school students and who had given Ragan and his conspirators access to their accounts, also in exchange for cash. Ragan and his conspirators created counterfeit checks, including counterfeit pandemic relief checks. Ragan and his

conspirators deposited the fraudulent checks online and at various bank ATMs throughout New Jersey and later withdrew funds from the bank accounts before the victim financial institutions identified the checks as fraudulent and could block further withdrawals. Ragan and his conspirators obtained and attempted to obtain approximately \$366,000 from victim financial institutions.

In addition to the prison term, Judge Wigenton also sentenced Ragan to three years of supervised release and ordered him to pay restitution of \$61,438.

Acting U.S. Attorney Honig credited postal inspectors of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, under the direction of Acting Inspector in Charge Raimundo Marrero; special agents with the U.S. Postal Service – Office of Inspector General, Northeast Area Field Office, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Matthew Modafferi; special agents with IRS-Criminal Investigation, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Michael Montanez; and special agents with the Office of the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA), under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Andrew McKay, with the investigation leading to today's sentencing. She also thanked the Summit Police Department, the New Providence Police Department, the Piscataway Police Department, the Newark Police Department, the South Orange Police Department, and the Little Falls Police Department for their assistance.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jonathan Fayer and Elaine K. Lou in Newark.

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