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News Release

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Wisconsin man pleads guilty to bank fraud, conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine

A 37-year-old man from New Richmond, Wisc., pleaded guilty last week in federal court to charges of bank fraud and conspiracy to distribute the highly dangerous and addictive drug methamphetamine.

Christopher Dwight Bierbrauer pleaded guilty to one count of bank fraud and one count of conspiracy to distribute and to possess with intent to distribute 500 or more grams of a substance containing a detectable amount of methamphetamine April 24 in St. Paul before United States District Court Judge Donovan Frank.

According to Bierbrauer's plea agreements, he did knowingly execute and attempt to execute a scheme to defraud a financial institution and to obtain money from that institution by means of false and fraudulent pretenses. The purpose of the alleged scheme was to fraudulently obtain more than \$30,000 by presenting and cashing forged and falsified checks at financial institutions and fraudulently using accounts.

Bierbrauer admitted that he fraudulently appropriated the identities of others without their knowledge or consent by manufacturing false identifications, fraudulent checks in their names and fraudulently using bank accounts in their names. Bierbrauer also used the false identifications and fraudulently-opened accounts to cash fraudulent checks at financial institutions, and obtained cash by making "split deposits," in which he would receive some cash back.

The plea agreement specifically cites two occurrences when Bierbrauer allegedly used the names of two different men to cash fraudulent checks for \$15,006 at one bank on Nov. 30, 2005, and for \$6,000 at a different bank on Feb. 1, 2006. On Dec. 29, 2005, Bierbrauer did unlawfully have in his possession a Dish Network bill and check payment which had been stolen from a Woodbury resident.

Bierbrauer's second plea agreement states that from 2006 through March 20, 2007, he did

knowingly and intentionally conspire with others to possess with intent to distribute and to distribute 500 or more grams of a substance containing a detectable amount of methamphetamine. Bierbrauer obtained more than 1.5 kilograms of the drug from various suppliers in Minnesota and elsewhere, and distributed it for profit.

A second defendant in connection with the conspiracy, Kelly Marie Jacob, 35, New Richmond, Wisc., pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to distribute and to possess with intent to distribute 500 or more grams of a substance containing a detectable amount of methamphetamine April 10 before Judge Frank.

Bierbrauer faces a potential maximum penalty of 30 years in prison on the bank fraud count and life in prison on the conspiracy count. Judge Frank will determine Bierbrauer's sentence at a future date.

The bank fraud case is the result of an investigation by the United States Postal Inspection Service, and the conspiracy case is the result of an investigation by the Duluth Police Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Both cases are being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael A. Dees.