



Department of Justice

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Northern District of Georgia

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“CROWN ROYAL BANDIT” BAGGED

Defendant Was Allegedly Responsible For 28 Armed Bank Robberies Over Nearly A Decade, Alleged Accomplice Now Charged

Atlanta, GA - BRUCE ALLEN HUGHES, 47, of Blairsville, Georgia, has been indicted by a federal grand jury on charges of conspiracy to commit Hobbs Act robbery, three counts of armed bank robbery, and four counts of use and possession of a firearm during the commission of a violent felony. HUGHES will be scheduled for an initial appearance/bond hearing/arraignment before a United States Magistrate some time after April 24, 2008. Another defendant named in the indictment, CHRISTINE VERNER, 42, of Athens, Georgia, is charged with conspiracy to commit Hobbs Act robbery, and possession of a firearm in furtherance of a violent crime.

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias said, “A dedicated group of detectives at the Athens-Clarke County Police Department helped to bring this 10 year-long investigation to a successful close. Along with significant assistance from the Banks County, Fannin County, and Madison County Sheriff's Departments, and the FBI's diligent work, we now have charged the alleged 'Crown Royal Bandit.' This case involved a staggering 28 armed bank robberies and a loss of over \$300,000 in federally-insured currency.”

FBI Atlanta Special Agent In Charge Greg Jones said, “Today's indictment of Mr. Hughes is an example of the benefits of a strong working relationship with our fellow law enforcement partners. It also serves as an excellent example of our partnership with the media and, ultimately, with the public in such matters. The media attention generated regarding the Crown Royal Bandit, and the resulting public response, was instrumental in the successful resolution of a crime spree that plagued the Metro Atlanta area and beyond for over ten years.”

Athens-Clarke County Police Chief Joseph Lumpkin said, “Members of the Athens-Clarke County Police Department's Criminal Investigation Division, particularly the Robbery/Homicide Unit, worked diligently--as is their practice and custom--to solve this bank robbery and thankfully, leads were developed that resulted in the identification

of this alleged long term offender.”

According to United States Attorney Nahmias, the indictment, and information released by the FBI during the investigation: from on or about May 1997, and continuing through on or about February 2008, HUGHES, who is also known as “Brian Scott Hughes,” “Bruce Alan Hughes,” and “Bruce Allen Hughes,” conspired with persons known and unknown to the grand jury to commit Hobbs Act robberies. The indictment charges that HUGHES participated in 27 armed bank robberies during this period, most of which involved the use of a mask and the display of a gun, which was fired during a couple of the bank robberies. The FBI and other agencies referred to the string of robberies as having been committed by the “Crown Royal Bandit” because in the first few bank robberies the robber used purple Crown Royal liquor bags to collect the cash. The four specific bank robberies charged in the indictment were the most recent in the Northern District of Georgia, and includes one in the Middle District of Georgia (Athens).

The indictment charges two separate conspiracies to commit Hobbs Act robberies, three counts of armed bank robbery and use of a firearm during a violent felony, one count of possession of a firearm in furtherance of a violent felony, and one count of possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. The charges carry a maximum sentence of 4 terms of life imprisonment plus 110 years in prison and a fine of up to \$2,500,000.

This case is being investigated by Special Agents of the FBI and the Bureau of the Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, along with the Athens-Clarke County Police Department, the Fannin County Sheriff's Department, the Banks County Sheriff's Department, and the Madison County Sheriff's Department.

Assistant United States Attorneys Matthew T. Jackson and Angela M. Jordan are prosecuting the case.

For further information please contact David E. Nahmias (pronounced NAH-me-us), United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan.