



Department of Justice

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THREE SENTENCED IN CHECK FRAUD SCHEME

Company's Computer System Manipulated

Atlanta, GA - SUSAN DENISE HARPER, 43, of Lithonia, Georgia, KEVIAN BATEMAN, 27, of Atlanta, Georgia, and OJINEKA JONES GODWIN, 51, of Alpharetta, Georgia, were sentenced today by United States Chief District Judge Jack T. Camp on charges of conspiracy to commit mail and wire fraud arising from a check fraud scheme against an insurance company.

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias said of the case, "Many fraud cases start with company insiders who are in a position of trust, but, as in this case, instead betray their employer and recruit others to help steal corporate cash. These cases can be difficult to investigate, with complex money trails, but the Secret Service and Postal Inspection Service again showed their expertise in nailing down the evidence and bringing the defendants to justice."

"One of the Secret Service's investigative priorities is to combat any unauthorized use or illegal access of computer networks within the banking and insurance industries. We want the public to know that our agency, along with our partners in federal law enforcement, will aggressively pursue individuals and organized groups who commit financial fraud for personal gain," said James Byers, Special Agent in Charge of the United States Secret Service, Atlanta Field Office.

"This is a great example of how criminals can not run from the arms of justice. As a result of the complex nature of this case, and the enormous amount of time and resources used to investigate it, we were determined to see these fraudsters brought to justice. Make no mistake, you cannot use the U.S. mail for fraud and get away with it," said Martin D. Phanco, Postal Inspector in Charge.

HARPER was sentenced to four years in federal prison. There is no parole in the federal system. HARPER was also ordered to serve three years of supervised release, and ordered to perform 150 hours of community service. She was also ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$378,295.

BATEMAN was sentenced to three years in federal prison, to be followed by three years of supervised release, and also ordered to perform 150 hours of community service, and pay restitution in the amount of \$378,295.

GODWIN was sentenced to two years, nine months in federal prison, to be followed by three years of supervised release, and pay restitution in the amount of \$299,500.

A fourth defendant, CHARLES FAUST, JR. 52, of Atlanta, Georgia, is expected to be sentenced at a later date not yet set by the court.

According to Nahmias and the information presented in court: HARPER was employed at Underwriters Safety & Claims ("US&C") as a Claims Adjuster and Supervisor of the Property and Casualty Division. She manipulated US&C's computer system in two ways to cause checks to be issued to fraudulent payees. Her first method was to re-open an insurance claim, changing the name of the claimant to a fraudulent payee, in some instances recording false notes regarding the nature of the claim, and causing a payment to be issued. The second method involved HARPER creating a fictitious claimant and corresponding documentation and then causing a payment to be issued. The checks would be cut at US&C's headquarters and then mailed to the fraudulent payees in Georgia. Upon receipt of a check, the payee would negotiate it and HARPER would get the proceeds. HARPER, who holds a law degree but is not a practicing attorney, was found guilty by a federal jury after trial.

KEVIAN BATEMAN worked under HARPER at US&C, and recruited others to negotiate checks. He pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy. OJINEKA JONES GODWIN negotiated 14 checks, and also pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy. CHARLES FAUST, JR. negotiated 3 checks, and also pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy.

The fraudulent payees were paid for their services for helping to negotiate the checks. The total loss to US&C was over \$384,000.

This case was investigated by Special Agents of the United States Secret Service and Inspectors from the United States Postal Inspection Service.

Assistant United States Attorney Bernita Malloy prosecuted 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.