

This article was reproduced from the March/April 2004 issue of *Update*, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security's internal newsletter.

Cameroon National Sentenced in Passport Fraud Case

On December 9, 2003, Stephen Azia Teneng, a Cameroon national, was sentenced in the Northern Illinois District Court to 75 months in federal prison and 3 years supervised release for passport, identity, and credit card fraud. Teneng, who was arrested by Diplomatic Security Chicago Field Office agents in February 2003, has an extensive history of fraud and using false identities.

This case originated nearly a year ago when Teneng, who had previously applied for a passport, appeared at the Chicago Passport Agency in response to a ruse letter. During an interview, Teneng admitted submitting a fraudulent passport application and was immediately arrested. His fingerprints revealed an arrest history, and the local Assistant U.S. Attorney agreed to prosecute this case on passport fraud charges.

However, this was only the beginning of the story. During Teneng's arrest, Diplomatic Security agents discovered credit cards, a social security card, and a state identification card bearing one of his victim's identities. Upon checking the last known address of the victim in Boston, DS agents there discovered the victim was a mentally retarded adult and that Teneng had been his caregiver. DS agents in Chicago, through their contact with the victim's guardian, learned of additional credit cards and purchases made in the

Chicago area and were able to obtain a search warrant for Teneng's Bolingbrook, Illinois, residence. During the search, agents discovered several blank birth certificates, as well as birth certificates, credit cards, and other identification documents in different names, all bearing Teneng's photograph. DS agents also learned of several previous investigations into Teneng's activities conducted by the Secret Service, postal inspectors, and Social Security. These previous investigations did not meet U.S. Attorney prosecution standards and were turned over to lower state courts.

After being confronted with the evidence seized from his residence and following plea negotiations, Teneng entered a plea of guilty to passport fraud, identity theft, and credit card fraud. Due to Teneng's extensive fraud history, the vulnerable status of the victim, and Teneng's position as the group home director, he was sentenced to the upper end of the sentencing guidelines by the court. In December 2003, he was given 6 years and 3 months in prison, 3 years supervised release, and ordered to pay almost \$8,000 in restitution. In light of the Diplomatic Security investigation and subsequent convictions, Teneng's asylum status is now under review by the Department of Homeland Security. 

