



**United States Department of Justice
United States Attorney's Office
District of Minnesota**

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, November 3, 2011
WWW.JUSTICE.GOV/USAO/MN

St. Cloud man pleads guilty to stealing veteran benefits

MINNEAPOLIS— Earlier today in federal court, a 52-year-old man from St. Cloud pleaded guilty to stealing approximately \$54,083 in veterans' benefits, specifically benefits paid to the surviving spouses of veterans who died in military action. Mitchell George Pederson pleaded guilty to one count of theft of government funds. Pederson, who was indicted on August 17, 2011, entered his plea before United States District Court Judge Joan N. Ericksen.

In his plea agreement, Pederson admitted that from June 1, 2006, through June 1, 2010, he stole Dependency and Indemnity Compensation benefits. Those benefits are paid to surviving spouses of veterans who died in military action who have not remarried and surviving spouses who have remarried but are at least 57 years of age. The benefits were being paid to Pederson's mother, who died in 2004. The benefits should have been terminated upon her death, but Pederson continued to deposit them into his account.

For his crime, Pederson faces a potential maximum penalty of ten years in prison. Judge Ericksen will determine his sentence at a future hearing, yet to be scheduled. This case is the result of an investigation by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs-Office of Inspector General and Minnesota Financial Crimes Task Force. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Kevin S. Ueland.

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