

PRESS RELEASE

Four Individuals Charged in \$63 Million Mail Theft Conspiracy, Including Two Postal Employees

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For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of Michigan

DETROIT – Four individuals were charged in an Information for their involvement in a \$63 million scheme that involved stealing checks from the mail and selling them online, United States Attorney Jerome F. Gorgon Jr. announced today.

Gorgon was joined in the announcement by U.S. Postal Service Inspector General Tammy Hull; Acting Inspector in Charge Sean McStravick, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, Detroit Division; Special Agent in Charge Charles Miller, Detroit Field Office, Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation; Special Agent in Charge Kelly Moening, Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration; and Megan Howell, Special Agent-in-Charge, Great Lakes Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General.

Jaiswan Williams, 31, of Rochester Hills, Dequan Foreman, 30, of Eastpointe, Vanessa Hargrove, 39, of Detroit, and Crystal Jenkins, 31, of Detroit, were charged with conspiracy to aid and abet bank and wire fraud. Hargrove and Jenkins were United States Postal Service employees who diverted and ultimately stole checks and other negotiable instruments from the mail, including a high volume of tax refund checks issued by the U.S. Treasury. Williams and Foreman were the administrators of the online marketplaces used to sell the checks.

According to the Information, postal employees Hargrove and Jenkins would provide the stolen checks to Williams and Foreman in exchange for payments. Williams and Foreman would take those checks and market them for sale via Telegram Messenger, a cloud-based, cross-platform instant messaging application. Prices varied based on the face-value of the checks. One of the Telegram channels, named "Whole Foods Slipsss," was used to advertise high-dollar checks, while another channel, named "Uber Eats Slips," was used to advertise lower-dollar checks. "Slips" is a term commonly used in these schemes to refer to stolen checks. Transactions were completed off-platform

using a variety of electronic payment systems. Purchasers of these checks would then attempt to fraudulently cash them using a variety of methods.

If convicted of conspiracy, the defendants face up to 30 years in prison. Williams also faces charges for money laundering for activities dating back to October 2022, and for millions of dollars of fraudulent pandemic unemployment insurance benefit claims submitted between August and December 2020.

U.S. Attorney Gorgon stated, "When public employees break the public trust, they enrich themselves at the expense of the American taxpayer and undermine the institution itself. We will find and prosecute those who exploit their position for personal gain. We are committed to disrupting these shadowy schemes."

"This investigation represents the hard work and dedication by USPS OIG special agents, working with the U.S. Attorney's Office and other federal agencies, to bring charges on this significant mail theft investigation," said Tammy Hull, Inspector General U.S. Postal Service. "The OIG, along with our law enforcement partners, remains committed to safeguarding the U.S. Mail and ensuring the accountability and integrity of U.S. Postal Service employees."

"The charges against these four individuals underscore the U.S. Postal Inspection Service's commitment to securing the nation's mail system from those who seek to exploit it for personal and financial gain," said Sean McStravick, Acting Inspector in Charge of the Postal Inspection Service's Detroit Division. "Postal Inspectors utilize every tool at their disposal, including crucial partnerships, to uncover, investigate, and prosecute these schemes to the fullest extent of the law. Thank you to the U.S. Attorney's Office and our investigative partners for working tirelessly with us to bring charges in such an impactful mail theft investigation and maintain the integrity and respectability of the U.S. Postal Service."

The stealing of checks is not a victimless crime. The stolen checks belonged to citizens, to help them make payments for vital services or help through a tough time," said Special Agent in Charge Charles Miller, Detroit Field Office, IRS-CI. "The violations alleged in these charges carry extra weight as some of these individuals were trusted as public servants. We are committed, along with our law enforcement partners, to using our unique expertise to track intricate financial systems, find criminals, and hold them accountable for the crimes committed."

"The Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) aggressively investigates individuals who attempt to exploit U.S Treasury refund checks meant for hard working taxpayers for their own private gain," said TIGTA Special Agent in Charge Kelly Moening.

"TIGTA's mission is to protect the integrity of our nation's tax administration system. We are committed to working with our law enforcement partners to ensure that those who violate federal laws are prosecuted to the fullest extent possible."

"An important part of the mission of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General is to assist our law enforcement partners when investigative matters affect the integrity of Department of Labor programs or operations. We are committed to working closely with our law enforcement partners to investigate these types of matters, particularly when they adversely affect American workers," said Megan Howell, Special Agent-in-Charge, Great Lakes Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General.

The public is reminded that an Information is not evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent and entitled to a fair trial at which the government has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

This multi-agency investigation was lead by the U.S. Postal Service Office of the Inspector General (USPS-OIG), with the assistance of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS); the Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigations (IRS-CI); the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA); and the Department of Labor Office of the Inspector General (DOL-OIG), and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Ryan A. Particka and Darrin Crawford.

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