



UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE EASTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA

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Three Plead Guilty to Conspiring to Commit Bank Fraud

(Alexandria, Virginia) – Precious Matthews, age 27, of Miami, pled guilty yesterday and Ezenwa Onyedebelu, age 20, and Brandy Anderson, age 30, of Dallas, pled guilty today to conspiracy to commit bank fraud. Dana J. Boente, Acting United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, [**Alexandria P.D., FBI, and USSS**], made the announcement after the pleas were accepted by United States District Judge T.S. Ellis, III.

To date, nine individuals have been arrested as part of this investigation. Those individuals include five people who were indicted by a federal grand jury on September 25, 2008: Matthews, Onyedebelu, Anderson, Abel Nnabue, age 33, of Dallas, who pled guilty on October 16, and Paula Gipson, age 33, of Dallas. The Indictment charges these five defendants with conspiring to commit bank fraud. Sentencing has been set for January 30, 2009 for Nnabue, and February XX, 2009 for Matthews, Onyedebelu, and Anderson. Matthews, Onyedebelu, and Nnabue face a maximum penalty of 30 years in prison, a fine of up to \$1,000,000, and up to five years of supervised release. Anderson faces a maximum penalty of five years in prison, a fine of up to \$250,000, and up to three years of supervised release. Several individuals have also been arrested in a [parallel investigation](#) by the United States Attorney's Office in New Jersey and the United States Postal Inspection Service.

According to court documents, the defendants and other co-conspirators used fee-based web databases to search for potential victims with large balances in home equity lines of credit (HELOC) accounts. This information included name, address, date of birth, and social security number. Once the conspirators identified a victim they used other online databases to obtain information commonly used in security questions, such as the victim's mother's maiden name. The conspirators then obtained credit reports on the victims in order to verify personal information and account balances.

Armed with the victim's personal information, the conspirators called the victim's financial institution, impersonated the victim, and transferred the majority of the available money from the HELOC account into an account from which a wire transfer could be sent. The conspirators would then wire transfer hundreds of thousands of dollars to overseas accounts controlled by members of the conspiracy. The conspirators used caller-ID spoofing services, prepaid cell phones and PC wireless cards, and transferred victims' home telephone numbers in order to impersonate the victim and avoid identifying themselves.

Once money arrived in a foreign bank, normally in Asia, a money mule who had opened the account for this purpose withdrew the money in cash. The money mule would keep a portion and hand the rest to a courier outside of the bank. The courier would gather several wire transfers from various money mules and crate the money up and send it to the head of the group in Asia. This person would then send wire transfers to various members of the conspiracy, including a €40,000,000 (\$51,000,000) wire transfer sent earlier this year.

This case was investigated by the Alexandria Police Department, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and United States Secret Service. Assistant United States Attorney John Eisinger and DOJ Trial Attorney Tyler Newby are prosecuting the case on behalf of the United States.

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