

NEWS

United States Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney, District of New Jersey
401 Market Street, Fourth Floor
Camden, New Jersey 08101



Christopher J. Christie, U.S. Attorney

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Assistant U.S. Attorney
NORMAN J. GROSS
856-968-4930

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Nigerian National Sentence to 18 Months in Federal Prison for Scheme to Distribute Fraudulent Checks

(More)

Greg Reinert, PAO
Public Affairs Office

856-757-5233
973-645-2888

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CAMDEN – A Nigerian national was sentenced to 18 months in federal prison today for his role in a scheme to distribute fraudulent checks, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

U.S. District Judge Renée Marie Bumb also ordered Adetokunbo Ojo, 26, who was legally in the United States and residing in Atlantic City, to cooperate with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials regarding his deportation proceedings upon the completion of his prison term.

On Oct. 22, 2007, Ojo pleaded guilty before Judge Bumb to a one-count Information, which charged that between February and August 2007, the defendant possessed counterfeit securities of various organizations.

At his plea hearing, Ojo admitted that before he came to the United States an individual named “Femi” asked him to receive a package from Nigeria when he arrived in the United States. Femi told Ojo that the package would contain illegitimate checks for distribution in the United States. Ojo admitted that he expected to be paid \$20,000 for receiving the checks and then distributing the checks to other individuals.

Ojo admitted that on Aug. 24, 2007, he received an email from Femi that contained ten names and addresses of Nigerian individuals in the United States and instructed Ojo to distribute the checks those individuals. On that same day, “Femi” contacted Ojo and provided him with a name and phone number of an individual with whom he was to meet to obtain the package, which had been sent from Africa to Canada and on to the Atlantic City area. When Ojo called the phone number, he admitted that he talked to a woman who possessed the package and he agreed to pay her for delivering the package to him. The two then agreed to meet at the Atlantic City Public Library on August 27, 2007.

At the prescheduled meeting, Ojo met the woman, who unbeknownst to him was an undercover law enforcement officer, and gave her partial payment on the agreed upon amount of cash. In return the woman handed Ojo approximately half of the checks that were in the package. Ojo was then placed under arrest by Special Agents with the FBI.

Ojo admitted that the package he was to receive contained the following counterfeit securities:

- 50 American Express Traveler’s Checks in denominations of \$500, totaling \$25,000,
- 20 Atlantic City Hilton Casino checks in denominations of \$4,500, totaling \$90,000,
- 15 Atlantic City Hilton Casino checks in denominations of \$3,500, totaling \$52,500,
- 17 Atlantic City Hilton Casino checks in denominations of \$2,500, totaling \$42,500,
- 11 State Bank checks of Fenton, Michigan, all of which were blank,

- 16 Patriot Bank checks of Fredericksburg, Virginia, all of which were blank,
- 16 Advancial Bank checks of Richardson, Texas, all of which were blank.

In determining the actual sentence, Judge Bumb consulted the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, the defendant's criminal history, if any, and other factors. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all that time.

Christie credited Special Agents of the FBI's Atlantic City Resident Agency, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun in Newark, with the investigation leading to the guilty plea.

The Government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Norman J. Gross, Attorney-in-Charge of the Criminal Division in Camden.

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Defense Attorney: Thomas Young, Esq. Assistant Federal Public Defender