



*United States Attorney
District of New Jersey*

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**CAMDEN, NEW JERSEY MAN PLEADS GUILTY
TO ROBBING LOCAL BANK BRANCH TWICE**

CAMDEN, N.J. – A Camden, N.J., man who used a hoax bomb and a fake gun to commit bank robberies pleaded guilty today to robbing a Bank of America in Camden on June 18, 2009, and again on Dec. 21, 2009, United States Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

Steven Passamante, 42, pleaded guilty to an Indictment charging him with two counts of bank robbery for robbing the bank of nearly \$7,000 and over \$26,200 on respective occasions. Passamante entered his guilty plea before United States District Judge Joseph H. Rodriguez in Camden federal court.

According to documents filed in this case and statements made in court:

Passamante walked into the bank on June 18, 2009, and approached a bank teller with a note demanding money and claiming that he had a bomb. Passamante then showed the teller a brown paper bag containing a nine-volt battery. The teller complied with the note and Passamante fled the bank with nearly \$7,000, leaving the “bomb” on the bank teller counter.

On Dec. 21, 2009, Steven Passamante and his brother, Christopher Passamante, 44, of Camden, parked a borrowed car a few blocks away from the same Bank of America. While Christopher Passamante waited in the parked car, Steven Passamante entered the bank and approached the bank manager under the pretense that he was interested in opening an account. Steven Passamante then pulled what was later identified as an imitation firearm out of his backpack and threatened the bank tellers, demanding money. The tellers complied and Passamante fled the bank with \$26,284.

Steven Passamante left in the car driven by his brother, and a bank customer who had followed him out of the bank called 911. The Passamante brothers traveled approximately 15 blocks through the City of Camden, at times pursued by law enforcement, until Christopher Passamante lost control of the car and crashed into a snow bank. Law enforcement officers immediately arrested Christopher Passamante; Steven Passamante fled the scene of the crash but was found hiding in a nearby abandoned building a short time later. Law enforcement authorities recovered the stolen money.

On June 14, 2010, Christopher Passamante appeared before Judge Rodriguez and pleaded guilty to an Information charging him with the December 2009 bank robbery. He was sentenced to 33 months in prison on Sept. 22, 2010.

Steven Passamante faces a maximum potential penalty of 20 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000 on each count to which he pleaded guilty, as well as restitution as ordered by the Court. Sentencing is scheduled for March 21, 2011.

U.S. Attorney Fishman credited special agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent In Charge George C. Venizelos in Philadelphia; the Camden County Prosecutor's Office, and the Camden County Sheriff's Office for their work leading to today's guilty plea.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Matthew T. Smith of the U.S. Attorney's Office Criminal Division in Camden.

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Defense counsel: Lisa Evans Lewis, Esq., Assistant Federal Public Defender, Camden