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Newport News Man Sentenced to 16 Years in Prison for Financial Scheme

(Newport News, VA) – Braxton Bumpers, age 39, of Newport News, Virginia, was sentenced today to 16 years in prison, followed by 5 years of supervised release, and was ordered to pay \$91,842.28 in restitution to the victims of his offenses. Chuck Rosenberg, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, made the announcement after Bumpers was sentenced by United States District Judge Raymond A. Jackson. Judge Jackson departed upward from the applicable sentencing guideline range based on Bumpers' continued criminal conduct following his guilty plea on September 13, 2006.

According to court records, Braxton Bumpers, Sherrae Brown, Patrick Archer, and others were involved in a bank fraud scheme spanning from January 2004 through March 2005. During that time, Bumpers was incarcerated at Hampton Regional Jail in Hampton, Virginia, and the Powhatan Correctional Facility in Powhatan, Virginia. Bumpers coordinated with others, including Brown and Archer, by telephone and in meetings at the prison facility. Through these efforts, Bumpers obtained a business license for a fraudulent business called "Kenya & Barry International" to open bank accounts and to provide an air of legitimacy to checks written in the company's name. Kenya & Barry International was a shell company that did not engage in legitimate business operations.

Using the false business documentation, the co-conspirators opened up fraudulent Kenya & Barry accounts. Then, they issued numerous fraudulent checks on the Kenya & Barry accounts, knowing that there were insufficient funds in those accounts to cover the checks when they were cashed. Bumpers enlisted others, including Brown and Archer, to recruit other individuals to cash or deposit the checks into their own legitimate personal accounts at other financial institutions. Because Bumpers was in prison, Brown and Archer assisted him by coordinating the deposits into the legitimate personal accounts and the subsequent withdrawal, or attempted withdrawal, of the stolen funds from those accounts.

The co-conspirators targeted banks and credit unions which would cash the checks or release the funds associated with those checks into other accounts without adequately verifying that the issuing account had sufficient funds to cover the checks. Once the deposits were made, the co-conspirators would withdraw or attempt to withdraw the funds associated with the fraudulent Kenya & Barry International check from the legitimate personal accounts. Upon receiving the proceeds, the money would be divided among the co-conspirators. Brown and Archer, who were named in the indictment with Bumpers, also pled guilty for their roles and were previously sentenced by Judge Jackson late last year.

The investigation was conducted by the United States Secret Service in cooperation with the Newport News Police Department. Assistant United States Attorney Michael Gill prosecuted the case for the United States.

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