



Department of Justice

Office of the United States Attorney Western District of Wisconsin

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Two Charged with Robbery of Eau Claire Bank

Madison, Wis. - Stephen P. Sinnott, Acting United States Attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin, announced that a federal grand jury sitting in Madison returned an indictment today charging Eric Koenig, 48, and Debra Berenz, 40, both of Eau Claire, Wis., with bank robbery. The indictment charges both defendants with the July 15, 2009 armed bank robbery of the U.S. Bank branch located at 5700 Old Mill Plaza, Eau Claire. The indictment also charges both defendants with conspiracy to commit armed bank robbery, and use of a weapon during a crime of violence. In addition, Koenig is charged with being a felon in possession of a loaded .22 caliber semi-automatic pistol and .22 caliber ammunition.

The indictment alleges that in the winter of 2008-2009 Koenig made multiple trips to the bank to conduct surveillance. On four to six occasions, Koenig brought small denomination bills to the bank and requested that they be exchanged for larger denominations. The tellers used a second teller drawer to access the larger denomination bills requested by Koenig.

The indictment alleges that on July 15, 2009, Berenz drove Koenig to the U.S. Bank. The indictment alleges that Koenig entered the bank and robbed it, wearing dark-colored sunglasses and a light-colored hooded sweatshirt with the hood up. Koenig allegedly pointed a .22 caliber silver-colored pistol at the two tellers and demanded money. The indictment also alleges that Koenig repeatedly told the tellers that he wanted only the large bills from the "second drawer," and provided the tellers an empty bag for the money.

The indictment alleges that after obtaining \$4,290 in cash from the tellers, Koenig then exited the bank on foot and ran across the parking lot, got into the front passenger seat of the car driven by Berenz, and the defendants fled the scene.

If convicted, both defendants face a maximum penalty of 25 years on the armed bank robbery count, five years on the conspiracy count, and a mandatory consecutive

seven years on the brandishing of a firearm count. Koenig also faces a maximum penalty of ten years on the felon-in-possession count.

The charges against Koenig and Berenz are the result of an investigation conducted by the Eau Claire County Sheriff's Office, Dunn County Sheriff's Office, Altoona Police Department, Wisconsin State Patrol, and Federal Bureau of Investigation. The prosecution of this case has been assigned to Assistant U.S. Attorney Daniel J. Graber.

You are advised that a charge is merely an accusation and that a defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

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