



# Department of Justice

Acting United States Attorney Sally Quillian Yates  
Northern District of Georgia

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**DEPOSIT OF STOLEN ECONOMIC STIMULUS CHECKS & INCOME TAX  
REFUND CHECKS LEADS TO INDICTMENT OF TAX PREPARER ON  
CHARGES OF BANK FRAUD AND BANK BRIBERY**

*Elliott Makes Court Appearance; Second Defendant Charged with Accepting Bribe*

Atlanta, GA - CYNTHIA ANNETTE ELLIOTT, 44, of College Park, Georgia, made her first appearance today before a United States Magistrate Judge on charges of bank fraud in connection with a scheme to defraud the Bank of America through the deposit more than 100 stolen economic stimulus checks and income tax refund checks. ELLIOTT and SHAWN M. JARRETT, 36, of Jonesboro, Georgia, were indicted on July 29, 2009, on charges related to ELLIOTT's bribery of JARRETT, a Bank of America employee. ELLIOTT was arrested earlier this week. JARRETT made his first appearance in court on July 30, 2009.

Acting United States Attorney Sally Quillian Yates said of the case, "The defendants allegedly acquired stolen economic stimulus checks and income tax refund checks and deposited them into a business bank account. Now both of them face the possibility of felony convictions and federal prison, as well as paying back every penny of the stolen funds as restitution."

Jeffery T. Gilbert, Special Agent in Charge of the United States Secret Service, Atlanta Field Office, said, "This case impacted taxpaying citizens who failed to receive, in a timely fashion, refunds and payments rightfully due them from the federal government. Rest assured, whenever anyone in a position of trust, such as tax preparers or bank employees, violates that trust, we will aggressively pursue these perpetrators by all investigative means."

"When tax preparers engage in schemes to defraud taxpayers and the government, the taxpayers' faith in the tax system as well as the reputation of the entire tax preparer community are adversely affected," said Melissa T. Chedotal, Special Agent in Charge of the Atlanta Field Division of the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration. TIGTA is the Federal agency responsible for investigating allegations about paid tax preparers.

According to Acting United States Attorney Yates, the indictment, and other information presented in court: ELLIOTT allegedly acquired more than 100 checks belonging to others, including economic stimulus checks and income tax refund checks, with the intent to convert such checks to her own use, knowing that they had been stolen from their rightful owners. Pursuant to the 2008 Economic Stimulus Act, individuals who filed a 2007 individual income tax return and met certain eligibility requirements were entitled to receive a one-time rebate or “stimulus payment” from the United States Treasury ranging from \$300 to \$1,200. Taxpayers who did not request direct deposit for their 2007 refund were supposed to receive a paper check by mail. The stolen checks obtained by ELLIOTT, all of which were issued by the United States Treasury, had a total face value of more than \$350,000.

ELLIOTT was purportedly engaged in the business of preparing income tax returns for members of the public. JARRETT was employed by Bank of America as an Assistant Manager at the location where ELLIOTT did her banking. ELLIOTT told JARRETT that many of her customers did not have a bank account or the necessary identification to cash a check. ELLIOTT then allegedly offered to give JARRETT some money if he would allow her to deposit various types of third-party checks to her business accounts without requiring the payees to appear in person at the bank and present identification. JARRETT accepted ELLIOTT'S offer and, thereafter, made it possible for ELLIOTT to deposit the stolen checks to her business accounts. JARRETT sometimes signed off on ELLIOTT'S deposit slips without even looking at the corresponding checks, many of which were either not endorsed or bore a forged endorsement.

From approximately November 2007 through approximately August 2008, ELLIOTT allegedly paid JARRETT a total of approximately \$3,000 to \$4,000 in cash, which ELLIOTT delivered to JARRETT in installments during various meetings at the Bank of America branch where JARRETT worked and at a nearby restaurant. ELLIOTT allegedly withdrew all of the fraud proceeds from her accounts using a combination of ATM withdrawals, counter withdrawals, debit card purchases, and check purchases, knowing that her accounts did not have legitimate funds on deposit to cover her withdrawals.

The indictment charges ELLIOTT with five counts of bank fraud and one count of bribing a bank employee and charges JARRETT with receipt of a bribe by a bank employee. The bank fraud charges each carry a maximum sentence of 30 years in prison and a fine of up to \$1,000,000. The bribery charges each carry a maximum sentence of 30 years in prison and a fine of up to \$1,000,000 or three times the value of the bribe, whichever is greater. In determining the actual sentence for each defendant, the Court will consider the United States Sentencing Guidelines, which are not binding but provide appropriate sentencing ranges for most offenders.

The investigation of the source of the stolen checks is continuing.

Members of the public are reminded that the indictment contains only allegations. The defendants are presumed innocent of the charges, and it will be the government's burden to prove each defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt at trial.

This case is being investigated by Special Agents of the United States Secret Service and the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration.

Assistant United States Attorney Russell Phillips is prosecuting the case.

For further information please contact Sally Q. Yates, Acting United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is [www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan](http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan).