



Department of Justice

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Northern District of Georgia

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DEFENDANTS CHARGED IN WIDESPREAD IDENTITY THEFT SCHEME

Mail Carrier Allegedly Obtained U.S. Citizenship Under Stolen Identity and Then Stole Identities of 80 Victims on Her Local Mail Route

ATLANTA, GA - OPEOLUWA ADIGUN a/k/a Mary Afolabi, age unknown, and CHUKWUKA ONYEKABA a/k/a Gabriel Onyekaba, 32, both of Marietta, Georgia, have been indicted by a federal grand jury on charges of stealing the identities of more than 80 individuals in the Atlanta metropolitan area and opening credit card accounts, loans, and bank accounts in the names of the stolen identities. ADIGUN is also charged with immigration, social security, and passport fraud. ADIGUN and ONYEKABA were arraigned today before United States Magistrate Judge C. Christopher Hagy. A detention hearing is scheduled for Friday, May 14, 2010, at 3:00 p.m.

United States Attorney Sally Quillian Yates said of the case, "Identity theft is not a 'soft crime'; it destroys the good credit and peace of mind of its victims. Fortunately, the hard work of agents and officers from nearly a dozen local and federal agencies has put an end to an especially disturbing identity theft ring involving a defendant who was masquerading as a public servant."

"Hundreds of hours have gone into this investigation in Paulding County," said Paulding County Sheriff Gary Gullede. "As our investigation expanded into other jurisdictions, the need for the support of outside agencies became obvious. Our detectives, along with agents from several local, state, and federal agencies worked tirelessly to collect evidence and information that has ultimately led to this conclusion." Gullede added, "All of these agencies played an important role in gathering information and discovering over 80 victims of these crimes and hundreds of thousands of dollars that were fraudulently obtained."

Detective J. A. Waldon, Special Operations Division, Hiram Police Department said, "The city of Hiram would like to thank the Paulding County Sheriff's Office, the city of Marietta, and the numerous local, state and federal agencies involved in successfully apprehending Opeoluwa Adigun a/k/a Mary Afolabi and Chukwuka Onyekaba a/k/a Gabriel Onyekaba. Adigun was first apprehended within the city limits of Hiram on March 6, 2010, on Douglas County Warrants for Financial Identity Fraud. Today, the Hiram Police Department assisted local and federal agencies with the arrest of Adigun and Onyekaba on multiple federal charges. The officers and agents should be commended for their hard work and dedication in conducting all operations in a professional manner."

"Special Agents of the Office of Inspector General vigorously investigate fraud within the Postal Service," said Samuel Montalvo, Assistant Special Agent in Charge and Public Information Officer, United States Postal Service, Office of Inspector General, Southeast Area. "Most postal employees who handle mail are honest and trustworthy. However, one incident by an employee who violates that public trust and commits fraud, will result in the end of their postal career and possible criminal prosecution."

"Whenever criminals use the U. S. mail to defraud the American public, Postal Inspectors are not far behind. In this case, the defendants left a paper trail that led us right to them. The U. S. Postal Inspection Service's mission is to protect the U. S. mail. That's what we have done for over 200 years and that's what we will continue to do as long as criminals continue to use the U. S. mail to target the American public," said Martin D. Phanco, U. S. Postal Inspector in Charge of the Atlanta Division.

According to United States Attorney Yates, the charges and other information presented in court: Between May 2006 and March 2010, ADIGUN and ONYEKABA allegedly stole mail, credit cards, and other personal information from individuals in the metro Atlanta area, and then opened a variety of financial accounts under the victims' names. As part of the scheme, ADIGUN obtained a job as a mail carrier in the Hiram Post Office under the name Mary Afolabi, an identity she had stolen from another Nigerian citizen before ADIGUN entered the United States in 2004. Over 80 victims on ADIGUN's Hiram mail route have reported their identities stolen and used to open financial accounts.

Using the information stolen from the mail route customers, ADIGUN and ONYEKABA allegedly obtained credit cards and bank loans in their victims' names. They deposited the fraudulent loan proceeds into bank accounts opened under yet other victims' names and then wrote checks from those accounts to their two sham businesses, GMO Auto Services in Douglasville and Gabmike Limousine Service in Smyrna. They also used the fraudulent credit cards at their businesses.

Further, ADIGUN and ONYEKABA allegedly purchased gift cards and thousands

of dollars of merchandise with the fraudulent credit cards. In March 2010, the defendants were stopped by law enforcement with dozens of American Express, Walmart, and Target gift cards that had been purchased with stolen credit cards issued to individuals residing on ADIGUN's mail route in Hiram.

ADIGUN is also alleged to have fraudulently obtained a social security card and U.S. passport and, in March 2009, was naturalized as a U.S. citizen – all under the assumed name of Mary Afolabi.

The 46-count indictment alleges conspiracy, access device or credit card fraud, aggravated identity theft, bank fraud, mail theft, immigration fraud, social security fraud, and passport fraud. The charges carry maximum sentences that range from five to 30 years in prison. The aggravated identity theft charges require a mandatory minimum sentence of 2 years in addition to any other sentence imposed. In determining the actual sentence, the Court will consider the United States Sentencing Guidelines, which are not binding but provide appropriate sentencing ranges for most offenders.

This case is being investigated by the United States Postal Service, Office of Inspector General; United States Postal Inspection Service; United States Secret Service; United States Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement; Social Security Administration; Paulding County Sheriff's Office; Douglas County Sheriff's Office; Cobb County Sheriff's Office; Hiram Police Department; and Cobb County Police Department.

Assistant United States Attorney Stephen H. McClain is prosecuting the case.

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

For further information please contact Sally Q. Yates, 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.justice.gov/usao/gan.