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United States Attorney's Office  
District of Minnesota**



# News Release

**B. Todd Jones,  
United States Attorney**

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## **Three sentenced for stealing identities, obtaining more than \$150,000 from victims**

MINNEAPOLIS – Earlier today in federal court, a 34-year-old Maplewood woman was sentenced for her role in a scheme that was using the names and personal identification information of others on fraudulent checks resulting in a total attempted loss of more than \$300,000. United States District Court Judge David S. Doty sentenced Nou Thao to time already served along with 180 days at a community corrections center on one count of bank fraud conspiracy. Thao was indicted on September 15, 2010, along with Jason Richard Hansen, age 33, of Crystal, and Jason Elliott Clark, age 40, of Cottage Grove. Thao pleaded guilty on February 17, 2011.

On June 1, 2011, Judge Doty sentenced Clark to 48 months in prison on two counts of bank fraud, one count of bank fraud conspiracy, and one count of aggravated identity theft. Clark was convicted by a jury on February 18, 2011. In addition, Judge Doty sentenced Hansen to 30 months on one count of bank fraud conspiracy, one count of bank fraud, one count of access device fraud, and one count of aggravated identity theft. Hansen pleaded guilty on February 10, 2011. In addition, all three defendants were ordered to pay \$96,195.74 in restitution.

The evidence presented at Clark's trial proved that between March of 2007 and August of 2008, he conspired with others to obtain bank funds from the accounts of third parties without their knowledge by creating counterfeit checks that included stolen bank routing numbers and account numbers. They also used the name and personal information of another person with intent to commit bank fraud and access device fraud. Clark was found to be responsible for more than \$150,000.

Thao and Hansen's respective plea agreements state that from March of 2007 through August of 2008, they conspired with another man to commit bank and access device fraud. In

2009, that man, Marcus Kwamena Benson, age 39, of Maplewood, was convicted and sentenced for taking more than \$483,000 from the accounts of others at various financial institutions.

Hansen worked for a mortgage loan subsidiary company and had access to the personal identification and financial information of people who applied for mortgage loans. He admittedly stole that information and provided it to Benson, who then used it to create fraudulent checks and obtain cash. Thao admitted acquiring checks containing stolen information and depositing those checks into her bank account in order to obtain cash. In addition, she allowed her bank account to be used during the conspiracy to deposit wire transfers from the bank accounts of the conspiracy victims.

Following today's sentencings, Andrew Balkin, Acting Inspector in Charge of the Denver Division of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service's ("USPIS") Denver Division, which includes the Minneapolis and St. Paul area, said, "Postal inspectors will continue to protect the integrity of the U.S. Postal Service and aggressively investigate those cases where the U.S. Mail is used to defraud individuals or businesses of money and property."

This case was the result of an investigation by the USPIS, the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations, and the Minnesota State Patrol. It was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys LeeAnn K. Bell and Lola Velazquez-Aguilu.

This law enforcement action is in part sponsored by the interagency Financial Fraud Enforcement Task Force. The task force was established to wage an aggressive, coordinated and proactive effort to investigate and prosecute financial crimes. It includes representatives from a broad range of federal agencies, regulatory authorities, inspectors general, and state and local law enforcement who, working together, bring to bear a powerful array of criminal and civil enforcement resources. The task force is working to improve efforts across the federal executive branch and, with state and local partners, investigate and prosecute significant financial crimes, ensure just and effective punishment for those who perpetrate financial crimes, combat discrimination in the lending and financial markets, and recover proceeds for victims of financial crimes.

The USPIS and the Minnesota U.S. Attorney's Office remind people to protect themselves from identity theft. For more information, visit

<http://www.justice.gov/criminal/fraud/websites/idtheft.html>

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