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News Release

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Final defendant pleads guilty to passing counterfeit currency

Earlier today in federal court in Minneapolis, a 32-year-old former Minneapolis woman pleaded guilty to purchasing merchandise from Target and other area retailers with counterfeit currency and then returning the items in order to obtain real cash. Markeeta Wesley pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to pass counterfeit money. Wesley, who was indicted along with two co-defendants on October 5, 2010, entered her plea before United States District Court Judge Patrick J. Schiltz.

In her plea agreement, Wesley admitted that between January 1, 2009, and July 31, 2010, she conspired with others to pass counterfeit currency. She also admittedly used the counterfeit currency to purchase products at retailers only to return the items later for genuine cash. The total loss to retailers because of this conspiracy is estimated at more than \$70,000.

On January 24, 2011, Wesley's co-defendant, Corey Terrell Barnes, age 36, of St. Paul, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy and one count of producing and publishing counterfeit money. In his plea agreement, Barnes admitted producing the counterfeit currency as well as using it at retailers. On January 12, 2011, co-defendant Rochelle Lynn Roen, age 37, of Red Wing, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy. Like Wesley, Roen admittedly purchased merchandise with counterfeit money only to return it later for real cash.

For their crimes, the defendants face a potential maximum penalty of five years in prison. Barnes faces an additional 20 years for producing and publishing the counterfeit money. Judge Schiltz will determine their sentences at a future hearing, yet to be scheduled.

This case is the result of an investigation by the U.S. Secret Service, the Minneapolis Police Department, the Minnesota Financial Crimes Task Force, the St. Paul Police Department, the Woodbury Police Department, the Brooklyn Park Police Department, the Richfield Police

Department, and investigators from Target Corporation's Asset Protection. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Charles J. Kovats, Jr.

The Secret Service and the Minnesota U.S. Attorney's Office want to remind people how to check for counterfeit currency. For more information, visit http://www.secretservice.gov/know_your_money.shtml

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