

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Nov 17, 2009

Trenton Woman Pleads Guilty for Her Role in Bank Robberies in Atlantic and Mercer Counties

(More)

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CAMDEN – A Trenton woman pleaded guilty today for her role in two bank robberies committed in Atlantic and Mercer Counties, U.S. Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

Chade Harris, 22, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Jerome B. Simandle to a two-count Information that charges her with bank robbery. Judge Simandle continued the defendant's release on a \$100,000 bond pending sentencing, which is scheduled for Feb. 26.

According to a criminal Complaint charging Harris, which was signed on April 16, 2009, she assisted her boyfriend, Jerell Mulkey, 24, of Atlantic City, in robbing a PNC Bank branch in Lawrenceville and a Bank of America branch in Hammonton.

At her plea hearing, Harris admitted that on April 6, 2009, she and an individual, who she referred to as her "accomplice," went to the PNC Bank branch with the intent to rob the bank. Harris admitted that her role in the robbery included entering the bank to obtain a withdrawal slip for her accomplice's use in writing a note demanding money. Harris admitted that after her accomplice wrote the demand note, he entered the bank to rob it and then returned to the vehicle with approximately \$1,900 in cash. Harris admitted that she assisted her accomplice's escape by driving away from the bank.

Harris also admitted that on April 10, 2009, she assisted her accomplice in robbing the Bank of America branch of approximately \$1,400 by driving the getaway car.

Mulkey was arrested on a federal criminal Complaint, which was filed in the District of New Jersey, by Houston FBI agents and detectives from the Houston Bank Robbery Task Force at an apartment complex in Houston, Texas, on April 27, 2009. Mulkey was then transported back to New Jersey to answer the federal charges and is currently pending trial. Subsequently, the Southern District of Texas indicted Mulkey in connection with a bank robbery in Texas.

Despite indictment, all defendants are presumed innocent unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

The charge of bank robbery carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000 or twice the aggregate loss to the victims or gain to the defendants.

In determining an actual sentence, Judge Simandle will consult the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, the defendant's criminal history, if any, and other factors. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all that time.

Fishman credited Special Agents of the FBI's Hamilton Resident Agency, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun, with the investigation leading to the guilty plea.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney R. Stephen Stigall of the Criminal Division in Camden.

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Defense Attorney: Robin Kay Lord, Esq. Trenton