

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Aug. 12, 2009

Bank Robber Who Dressed in Drag Sentenced to 144 Months in
Prison for Committing Nine Robberies in Two States

(More)

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CAMDEN, N.J. – A Jersey City man was sentenced to 144 months in prison today for robbing or attempting to rob nine banks in New Jersey and Connecticut over a five-month period in 2008 and getting away with more than \$39,000, Acting U.S. Attorney Ralph J. Marra, Jr., announced.

U.S. District Judge Jerome B. Simandle also ordered Huy Trong Luong, 41, to pay restitution of \$39,067 and to serve three years of supervised release upon the completion of his prison term.

On Mar. 31, 2009, Luong specifically pleaded guilty to two counts of bank robbery associated with the April 20, 2008, robbery of Commerce Bank in Bergenfield, N.J., and the Jan. 11, 2008, robbery of a Wachovia branch in Greenwich, Conn. Luong, however, also admitted committing seven other robberies, all of the conduct was taken into consideration at sentencing.

In each of his robberies, Luong disguised himself as a woman, according to a criminal Complaint filed after his arrest following a final, failed robbery attempt on May 5, 2008, in Chatham, N.J. Inside his getaway minivan, Police found a black wig, a black Dolce & Gabbana hat, a woman's make-up kit and black jacket, according to the Complaint.

During his plea hearing, Luong admitted his participation in the following robberies and attempted robberies:

- April 30, 2008, robbery of Commerce Bank in Bergenfield, N.J., of \$12,020;
- Jan. 11, 2008, robbery of Wachovia Bank in Greenwich, Conn., of \$2,000;
- Jan. 13, 2008, robbery of Commerce Bank in Westport, Conn., of \$2,000;
- Jan. 22, 2008, robbery of Provident Bank in Toms River, N.J., of \$11,109;
- April 20, 2008, robbery of Commerce Bank in New Canaan, Conn., of \$3,600;
- April 26, 2008, attempted robbery of Wachovia Bank in Highland Park, N.J.;
- April 28, 2008, robbery of Commerce Bank in Stafford Twp., N.J., of \$5,388;
- May 4, 2008, robbery of Commerce Bank in Mahwah, N.J., of \$2,950;
- May 5, 2008, attempted robbery of Commerce Bank in Chatham, N.J.

Luong admitted that he made death threats or threatened the tellers with violence in each of the robberies. At the time of arrest, law enforcement recovered cash and a hoax bomb – what

appeared to be three sticks of dynamite with fuses, wrapped together – in Luong’s minivan. In reality, the sticks were Roman candle fireworks, according to the criminal Complaint. In the three Connecticut bank robberies, Luong passed a note to the tellers advising them that he had a bomb and would detonate it if they did not meet his demands.

In May 2008, Luong was indicted in the District of Connecticut in Bridgeport for the three Connecticut robberies. The cases were consolidated in New Jersey for purposes of the guilty plea and sentencing.

Marra credited Special Agents with the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun in Newark, N.J. for the investigation. He also credited the FBI in Connecticut and local police in New Jersey and Connecticut involved in the arrest and investigation of Luong.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Robert G. Marasco of the U.S. Attorney’s Violent Crimes Unit.

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Defense Counsel: Lisa Mack, Assistant Federal Public Defender, Newark, N.J.