

NEWS

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Egg Harbor Township Man Pleads Guilty To Bank Robbery Spree That Spanned From New Jersey To Texas

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CAMDEN – An Egg Harbor Township man pleaded guilty today for his role in a string of bank robberies in New Jersey and Texas, U.S. Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

Jerell Mulkey, 25, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Jerome B. Simandle to six counts of bank robbery – three which he committed in New Jersey and three which he committed in Houston. Mulkey agreed to plead to the Texas bank robberies in New Jersey rather than in Texas. Judge Simandle continued the defendant’s detention and scheduled sentencing for June 25, 2010.

At his plea hearing, Mulkey admitted to robbing the following banks of the following amounts of money on the following dates:

• Feb. 27, 2009	PNC Bank, Absecon	\$4,000
• Mar. 9, 2009	Capital One Bank, Houston	\$4,000
• Mar. 19, 2009	J.P. Morgan Chase, Houston	\$5,000
• Apr. 6, 2009	PNC Bank, Lawrenceville,	\$1,900
• Apr. 10, 2009	Bank of America, Hammonton	\$1,400
• Apr. 23, 2009	Wachovia Bank, Houston	\$14,000

Mulkey admitted that for each of the bank robberies, he entered the bank and presented a demand note to a teller. The demand note threatened that Mulkey had a gun. Mulkey further admitted that for the Apr. 6 and 10 robberies, his accomplice helped him escape by driving away from the area of the bank after Mulkey robbed it. Chade Harris, 22, of Trenton, pleaded guilty before Judge Simandle on November 17, 2009 to aiding and abetting Mulkey in the Apr. 6 and 10 robberies. Harris is scheduled to be sentenced on March 18, 2010 at 1:30 p.m.

On April 27, 2009, Mulkey was arrested in Houston by the FBI’s Houston Bank Robbery Task Force after agents with the FBI’s Newark Division developed information that Mulkey had traveled to Houston. When New Jersey FBI agents notified Houston FBI agents, the agents in Texas quickly realized Mulkey may have also been responsible for three bank robberies that had recently occurred there.

“This is a textbook example of how the prompt interaction between and among state and federal authorities can remove dangerous criminals from our streets. The cooperative efforts of all the dedicated law enforcement professionals in this case were truly exemplary,” Fishman said.

Each count of bank robbery to which Mulkey pleaded guilty 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 defendant. 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 offenses, 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 Trenton and Atlantic City Resident Agencies, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Michael Ward in Newark, New Jersey, Special Agents of the FBI's Houston Bank Robbery Task Force, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Richard C. Powers in Houston, Texas, and the Lawrence Township, Hammonton, Atlantic City, Egg Harbor Township, and Absecon police departments with the investigation leading to the defendant's 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: James J. Leonard, Jr., Esq. Atlantic City