

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Clementon Man Sentenced to 24 Months in Prison
For Defrauding Financial Institutions of \$347,000

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CAMDEN – A Clementon man was sentenced to 24 months in federal prison today on bank fraud and credit card fraud charges arising out of his scheme to defraud Commerce Bank of more than \$320,000 and MBNA America of approximately \$27,000, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

U.S. District Judge Joseph E. Irenas also ordered Remington T. Council, 24, to pay \$323,000 in restitution and to report to the Bureau of Prisons to begin serving his sentence on May 15, 2007.

Council entered his guilty plea to a two-count Information before U.S. District Judge Joseph E. Irenas on Oct. 24, 2005. Council pleaded guilty to one count of bank fraud and one count of credit card fraud.

According to the Information to which Council pleaded guilty, between April 2000 and September 2003, he caused fraudulent checks to be deposited into numerous accounts at Commerce Bank branches throughout Camden and Gloucester Counties. Very soon thereafter, Council had the proceeds from the fraudulent check funds withdrawn from the various accounts by the account holders, according to the Information.

At his plea hearing, Council admitted that he approached Commerce Bank account holders, many of whom were having financial problems, and persuaded them with offers of cash to allow him to deposit the fraudulent checks into the their accounts and then shortly afterwards withdraw the funds. According to a criminal Complaint that was filed on April 27, 2005, the account holders were typically given between \$300 and \$500 for use of their accounts. Council admitted that the fraud continued until September 2003 and that he caused \$320,532 to be withdrawn from Commerce Bank.

Additionally, in June 2003, Council began working with other individuals to defraud MBNA America by using the personal information of an unsuspecting victim to establish a credit card account in the name of J&J Wicker Concrete Construction Company (J&J Wicker), he admitted. The individual who's name was used to open the account did not own a concrete business and did not authorize the opening of the MBNA account. The individual contacted law enforcement after becoming aware of the account. Council admitted the purchases on the J&J Wicker credit card account totaled approximately \$27,000, which included the purchase of a 1997 Lexus ES-300 from an Egg Harbor Twp. auto dealership.

In determining an actual sentence, Judge Irenas consulted the 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.

Christie credited Special Agents of the U.S. Secret Service, Philadelphia Field Office, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Robert Slama, and Special Agents of the FBI's Philadelphia Division, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge J.P. Weis, with investigation of the case.

The Government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Howard Wiener of the U.S. Attorney's Office Criminal Division in Camden.

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Defense Attorney: Lori M. Koch, Esq. Assistant Federal Public Defender