

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Former Bank Employee Admits Thefts
Totaling \$496,000 from Wachovia Bank

(More)

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TRENTON – A former bank employee pleaded guilty today to thefts totaling approximately \$496,000 from bank teller drawers and automated teller machines at a Wachovia Bank branch in Ewing, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

Richard F. Harriott, 29, a.k.a. “Richard Harrison,” a Jamaican national who resides in Ewing, entered his guilty plea before U.S. District Judge Mary L. Cooper. Judge Cooper continued the defendant’s release on a \$150,000 bond pending sentencing, which is scheduled for July 25.

At his plea hearing, Harriott admitted that from April 2004 through May 2005, while employed as a teller manager by Wachovia Bank, he misapplied funds from his teller drawer. Harriot admitted that he repeatedly submitted false transaction reports indicating that various bank customers had performed transactions which, in fact, did not occur. He admitted doing so in an attempt to cover up his thefts from his teller drawer. Harriott admitted that as a result of his embezzlement he was fired from his position.

On Jan. 25, 2006, after his employment was terminated and he had been arrested for the embezzlement, Harriot entered the same bank branch after it had closed for business and committed a theft of approximately \$351,000 from two automated teller machines, he admitted.

The defendant was first arrested on Feb. 21, 2006, on a one-count Indictment, which was returned by a grand jury on Feb. 16, in connection with the embezzlement of funds from teller drawers. The defendant was arrested again on April 25 on a separate Indictment, which was returned on April 20, in connection with the ATM thefts. On July 13, 2006, a Superseding Indictment combining the charges in the earlier Indictments was returned by a grand jury.

Harriott pleaded guilty to one count of embezzlement of bank funds for the theft of funds from the teller drawers, which carries a maximum penalty of 30 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000 or twice the aggregate loss to the victims or gain to the defendant. The defendant also pleaded guilty to one count of stealing approximately \$351,000 from the ATM machines, which 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, U.S. District Judge Mary Cooper 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.

Christie credited Special Agents of the FBI's West Trenton Resident Agency, under the direction of Acting Special Agent in Charge Pedro Ruiz, with the investigation.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Peter Katz of the Criminal Division in Trenton.

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Defense Attorney: Andrea Bergman, Esq., Assistant Federal Public Defender