

09-06-06 -- Stephens, Keith -- Sentencing -- News Release

Newark Man Gets 43 Months for Using Stolen Credit Card Info

NEWARK – A Newark man who bought confidential credit card information from a former employee of MBNA Bank and then used that information to make unauthorized purchases billed to the unwitting credit card holders was sentenced today to 43 months in prison, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

U.S. District Court Judge Jose L. Linares also ordered Keith Stephens, 24, of Newark, to pay \$222,652 in restitution to his victims. Stephens has been in custody since his arrest on Sept. 30, 2005.

Stephens pleaded guilty on March 29, 2006, to conspiracy to commit fraud involving access devices, such as credit cards, said Assistant U.S. Attorney Bohdan Vitvitsky, who prosecuted the case.

During a six-month period in 2004 and 2005, Stephens obtained confidential credit card information from an associate who worked at MBNA Bank in Newark. After getting that information, Stephens used it to make various purchases, such as a \$10,165 purchase of electronic equipment in November 2004, that were charged to the credit card of an MBNA credit card holder without authorization. Companies from whom merchandise was bought, who subsequently did not receive payment because of the fraud, and to whom Horne was ordered to pay restitution, included Dell Computers, Staples, Barnes and Nobles, and Toshiba.

Christie credited Special Agents of the U.S. Secret Service under the direction of David J. O'Connor, Special Agent in Charge of the Newark Field Office, and Postal Inspectors from the U.S. Postal Inspection Service under the direction of Thomas Van de Merlen, Newark Division Inspector in Charge.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Bohdan Vitvitsky of the Securities and Health Care Fraud Unit in Newark.

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Defense Counsel:
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