

# ***NEWS RELEASE***



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## ***OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA***

*San Diego, California*

*United States Attorney  
Laura E. Duffy*

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*For Immediate Release*

### **NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY – February 28, 2013**

United States Attorney Laura E. Duffy announced that Kathleen Wurts was sentenced today in federal court in San Diego to serve 60 months in federal prison for conspiracy to commit mail fraud, wire fraud, and bank fraud, in connection with a \$17 million Internet fraud scheme. Ms. Wurts entered a guilty plea to one count of the indictment in April 2012. United States District Judge John A. Houston also ordered that Wurts serve a three year term of supervised release following her release from custody. Due to the number of victims, the location of victims worldwide, and the complexity of the case, Judge Houston found that restitution was indeterminate.

In her plea, Wurts admitted that through at least April 2010, she engaged in a conspiracy to defraud individuals who used Internet websites (such as Craigslist and Yahoo!) to find employment, purchase and sell items, and rent and purchase real property. According to court documents, Wurts' co-conspirators mailed her counterfeit money orders and travelers' cheques from outside the United States (Nigeria, Abu Dhabi, and the United Kingdom) and provided her with stolen bank account and credit card

numbers via emails and chat logs. Once received, Wurts created hundreds of fraudulent checks using the stolen bank account numbers. She then mailed the counterfeit money orders, travelers' cheques, and fraudulent checks to the victims using stolen credit card information to pay for the postage. The victims generally expected to receive a fixed amount for, as an example, the items they were selling, however, Wurts mailed them a money order, travelers' cheque, or check in an amount that exceeded the asking price. The victims were then directed to deposit the monetary instruments into their own accounts, keep a certain percentage "for their trouble" and wire-transfer the excess portion of the stolen amount to an overseas account. Wurts received more than \$800,000 in counterfeit money orders and travelers' cheques and created more than \$17.2 million in fraudulent checks using stolen bank account numbers. Wurts mailed these fraudulent monetary instruments to victims and paid more than \$13,000 for the postage using stolen credit card numbers.

This case was investigated by federal agents with Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations and the United States Postal Inspection Service.

**DEFENDANT**

**Criminal Case No. 11CR1952-JAH**

Kathleen Wurts

**SUMMARY OF GUILTY PLEA**

Title 18, United States Code, Section 1349 – Conspiracy to Commit Mail, Wire, and Bank Fraud

**INVESTIGATING AGENCIES**

Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations  
United States Postal Inspection Service