

Department of Justice

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Western District of New York

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VIOLENT FELON PLEADS GUILTY TO POSSESSION OF A FIREARM AND AMMUNITION

BUFFALO, N.Y.—U.S. Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr. announced today that Ronald E. Evans, 53, of Buffalo, NY, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Court Judge Richard J. Arcara, to being a felon in possession of a firearm and armed career criminal. As an armed career criminal, the charge carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 15 years in prison, a maximum penalty of life, and a fine of \$250,000.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Aaron J. Mango and Maura K. O'Donnell, who are handling the case, stated that in August of 2009, the United States Secret Service was alerted that a couple was passing counterfeit currency at the Walmart store located at 5033 Transit Road in Clarence, NY. Walmart security was able to recover video surveillance of the transactions, which showed defendant Evans, and a co-defendant, Tashine Knightner, making the transactions and exiting the store. The Secret Service, with the assistance of the New York State Police, then conducted a search warrant on September 1, 2009 at the residence of the couple. During the search, multiple pieces of counterfeit notes were recovered amounting to \$7,197.00. Additional items were seized which were used to produce the counterfeit notes, including a scanner/printer, cutting devices, and various types and weights of paper.

Both Evans and Knightner were present during the execution of the search warrant and admitted their role in counterfeiting and passing currency at Walmart. In addition, a .45 caliber handgun was located, along with a loaded magazine and ammunition for the handgun. Evans admitted that he was holding the handgun for another person. The Erie County Forensic Crime Laboratory found the defendant's DNA on the handgun. Based on prior convictions, namely attempted burglary in the 3rd degree (Niagara County Court), bank robbery and armed bank robbery (U.S. District Court, Western District of NY), the defendant is considered an armed career criminal under federal law and is subject to enhanced sentencing penalties for having been convicted of three or more violent felonies.

Co-defendant Knightner previously pleaded guilty to uttering counterfeit currency, and was sentenced to 18 months in prison by Judge Arcara.

The plea is the culmination of an investigation on the part of Special Agents of the United States Secret Service, under the direction of Special Agent-in-Charge Tracy Gast, Special Agents of the Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives under the direction of Special Agent-in-Charge Ronald B. Turk, and investigators with the New York State Police under the direction of Lieutenant Lt. Edward Kennedy. Additional assistance was also provided by the Erie County Department of Central Police Services, Forensic Laboratory.

Sentencing is scheduled for December 1, 2011 at 12:30 p.m. in Buffalo, NY before Judge Arcara.

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