

Department of Justice

United States Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr.
Western District of New York

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO FRAUD CHARGES

BUFFALO, N.Y.--U.S. Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr. announced today that Minnetta Walker, , of Buffalo, N.Y., pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Richard J. Arcara, to conspiracy to defraud the United States, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 371. The charge carries a maximum term of 5 years in prison, a \$250,000 fine, or both.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Mary Catherine Baumgarten, who is handling the case, stated that from at least in or about March, 2010 through February, 2011, the defendant was employed by the United States Department of Homeland Security, Transportation Security Administration, as a Behavior Detection Officer at the Buffalo Niagara International Airport (BNIA) in Cheektowaga, New York. During the course of her employment, the defendant conspired with others to defraud the TSA by interfering with and obstructing the security measures, procedures and requirements at the BNIA. During that period of time, the defendant assisted individuals, including Derek Frank, in bypassing the normal security procedures, measures, and requirements at the BNIA, including the functions performed by a TSA screener or Ticket Document Checker to examine persons, property and other articles entering aircraft and the airport area at the BNIA, and assisted Derek Frank in using a birth certificate card issued by the City of Buffalo Clerk's Office in another person's name to fly between Buffalo, New York, and Phoenix, Arizona.

TSA worked cooperatively with law enforcement and the United States Attorney's Office during this investigation. The agency aggressively investigates all allegations of misconduct and, when infractions are discovered, moves to end the federal careers of offenders. TSA holds its security officers to the highest professional and ethical standards and has a zero-tolerance policy for violating the law at the workplace. The actions of this one individual in no way reflects on the outstanding job our more than 47,000 security officers do every day to ensure the security of the traveling public.

The plea is part of an ongoing investigation on the part of Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Christopher M. Piehota; Transportation Safety Administration, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, under the direction of Federal Security Director, Rick DePietro; U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, under the direction of Dale Kasprzyk; NFTA Transit Police, under the direction of Chief George Gast, and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, under the direction of James C. Spero.

Sentencing is scheduled for _____, 2011, at __:00 p.m., in Buffalo, N.Y., before Judge Arcara.