

NEWS

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NYPD Officer Pleads Guilty to Armed Robbery Scheme

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NEWARK - A New York City police officer pleaded guilty today to conspiring to commit the armed robbery of a Carlstadt perfume warehouse, in which he, fellow NYPD officers, and others stole approximately \$1 million in perfume while holding 11 employees hostage, U.S. Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

Brian Checo, 24, of New York City, pleaded guilty to the conspiracy charge before U.S. District Judge William H. Walls. Checo was remanded to the Hudson County Correctional Facility pending his sentencing, which is scheduled for June 28, 2010 at 10:00 a.m.. On March 5, 2010, Checo was arrested pursuant to a Complaint along with NYPD Officer Richard LeBlanca of New York City, Gabriel Vargas of Brooklyn, Luis R. Morales of Brooklyn, Anselmo Jimenes, a/k/a "Anselmo Jimenes," of Brooklyn, Alan A. Bannout, of Brooklyn, and former NYPD Officer Orlando Garcia, of New York City. The Complaint alleged that the defendants conspired to obstruct commerce by robbing hundreds of boxes of high-end perfumes and fragrances from a warehouse used by a company known as In Style USA, Inc. in Carlstadt, New Jersey. NYPD Officer Kelvin L. Jones of New York City was charged in a separate Complaint on March 5 as part of a continuing investigation by federal authorities into the heist.

At his plea hearing, Checo, who worked in the 34th Precinct, admitted that, from December 2009 to February 2010, he conspired with fellow officers Kelvin L. Jones, Richard LeBlanca, and others to rob a warehouse used by a company known as In Style USA, Inc. in Carlstadt. Checo stated that on February 9, he, LeBlanca, Garcia and others entered the In Style USA, Inc. warehouse office while brandishing firearms, displaying NYPD-issued badges, and announcing themselves as NYPD. Checo admitted that once inside he, Jones, LeBlanca and Garcia restrained 11 employees' hands behind their backs and held them hostage while other conspirators loaded hundreds of boxes of perfume onto trucks that were used to transport the stolen perfume. Checo further stated that, after leaving the warehouse, he met Jones, LeBlanca, Garcia, and others in New York where they developed a plan to conceal the crime after some of the conspirators had been arrested at the robbery site by Carlstadt authorities. Checo admitted that, in an effort to conceal his involvement, he falsely reported to an NYPD precinct that his driver's license and credit card had been stolen, both of which Checo had presented earlier that day at a truck rental facility in Jersey City, where the conspirators had rented two of the trucks used in the heist.

The charge to which Checo pleaded guilty carries a maximum statutory penalty of 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. However, in determining an actual sentence, Judge Walls 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, including acceptance of responsibility. The judge has wide discretion and 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 of that time.

Fishman credited Special Agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Michael B. Ward, for the investigation. Fishman also thanked the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of John L. Molinelli, as well as the Carlstadt Police Department and the NYPD Internal Affairs Bureau, for their assistance in the investigation.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Christopher J. Gramiccioni and Eric T. Kanefsky of the Office's Special Prosecutions Division and Criminal Division, respectively.

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Defense counsel:

Kerry Gotlib, Esq. New York City