



UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

*United States Attorney Donald W. Washington
Western District of Louisiana*

United States Courthouse • 300 Fannin Street, Suite 3201 • Shreveport, Louisiana 71101-3068 • (318) 676-3600
United States Courthouse • 800 Lafayette Street, Suite 2200 • Lafayette, Louisiana 70501-7206 • (337) 262-6618

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Contact: Donald W. Washington (337-262-6618)
William J. Flanagan (318-676-3600)

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TWO MONROE, LA INDIVIDUALS INDICTED FOR IDENTITY THEFT, CREDIT CARD/GIFT CARD AND BANK FRAUD ACTIVITIES

Co-conspirators included individuals from the People's Republic of China and Russia

LAFAYETTE, LA: United States Attorney Donald W. Washington announced the indictment of AMON RASHAD PEOPLES, a/k/a Lorenzo Rix, age 23, of Mer Rouge, Louisiana and TONYELL T. TOLIVER, a/k/a Gina Willis, a/k/a Sonya Winters, age 36, of Monroe, Louisiana. PEOPLES and TOLIVER were indicted by a federal grand jury for participating in a scheme to defraud legitimate credit and debit card account holders to fraudulently and unlawfully enrich themselves. The defendants were found to be in possession of counterfeit and unauthorized access devices, namely stolen debit and credit card numbers, as well as access device-making equipment. The indictment of PEOPLES and TOLIVER is the culmination of a thirteen-month investigation conducted by the United States Secret Service in conjunction with other law enforcement agencies.

The indictment alleges that between July 1, 2005 and June 17, 2009, the defendants conspired to obtain debit and credit card numbers belonging to various individuals without the true account holder's knowledge or consent. It also states that the defendants would then re-encode the fraudulently obtained track data (information found on the magnetic strip of credit and debit cards that is read by ATMs and credit card

readers), through the use of computers and other device-making equipment, onto the magnetic strips of credit cards and gift cards, thereby creating counterfeit credit and gift cards.

The indictment further alleges that the defendants, using fictitious names, paid for the use of the credit and debit account numbers by wire transferring a portion of the money obtained from various card holders' accounts to other co-conspirators, including conspirators in the People's Republic of China and Russia. AMON PEOPLES is also charged with attempting to purchase bank account holders' individual account numbers from Regions Bank.

The indictment further alleges that PEOPLES and TOLIVER would use the counterfeit credit and gift cards to purchase consumer items and merchandise. For example, TOLIVER attempted to purchase goods in Dixie Inn, Louisiana using a counterfeit credit card.

Both PEOPLES and TOLIVER are charged with aggravated identity theft, which occurs when a person is committing a specific federal crime, such as access device fraud, while using another person's identity.

If convicted, the defendants face a maximum penalty of five years in prison, a fine of \$250,000, or both, for conspiracy to commit access device fraud; a maximum penalty of twenty years in prison, a fine of \$250,000, or both, for each count of access device fraud; and a mandatory penalty of two years in prison for aggravated identity theft. AMON PEOPLES also faces a maximum penalty of thirty years in prison, a fine of \$1,000,000, or both, for attempted bank fraud.

The case was investigated by the United States Secret Service, and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Cytheria D. Jernigan.

An indictment is merely an accusation and a defendant is presumed innocent unless and until he is proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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