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SACRAMENTO WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO HIJACKING ONLINE BANK ACCOUNT

SACRAMENTO--United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that SHARON D. RICHARDS, 43, of Sacramento, pleaded guilty today to bank fraud and computer fraud before United States District Judge William B. Shubb.

The case is the product of a joint investigation by the United States Postal Inspection Service and the Sacramento Police Department's Financial Crimes Unit.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Matthew D. Segal of the U.S. Attorney's Computer Hacking and Intellectual Property (CHIP) unit. According to Assistant United States Attorney Segal, the case began when the victim's purse was stolen. RICHARDS then used checks and information from the purse to buy a car and use the victim's online bank account to order credit cards and issue over $202,450.00 in checks to various persons. The defendant was arrested while driving a Nissan 350Z that she had bought with one of the victim's checks.

The defendant is scheduled to be sentenced by Honorable William B. Shubb on January 18, 2008, at 8:30 a.m.. The maximum statutory penalty for bank fraud is 30 years of incarceration and a $1 million fine. The maximum statutory penalty for computer fraud is five years of incarceration and a $250,000

fine. However, the actual sentence will be determined at the discretion of the court after consideration of the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of variables, and any applicable statutory sentencing factors.