McGREGOR W. SCOTT

United States Attorney
Eastern District of California

NEWS RELEASE

Sacramento
501 I Street, Suite 10-100
Sacramento, CA 95814
Tel 916/554-2700
TTY 916/554-2877

Fresno
2500 Tulare Street, Suite 4401
Fresno, CA 93721
Tel 559/497-4000
TTY 559/497-4500

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Contact: Lauren Horwood
(916) 554-2706
http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/cae

FIVE YEARS IN PRISON FOR TAKEOVER OF ONLINE BANK ACCOUNT

SACRAMENTO--United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that SHARON D. RICHARDS, 43, of Sacramento was sentenced today by United States District Judge William B. Shubb to five years' imprisonment. The defendant pleaded guilty to bank fraud and computer fraud before Judge Shubb on October 29, 2007.

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

According to Assistant United States Attorney Matthew D. Segal of the United States Attorney's Computer Hacking and Intellectual Property (CHIP) Unit, 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, bought with one of the victim's checks. The Postal Inspection Service intercepted most of the victim's checks before the defendant could use them.

Judge Shubb, in sentencing the defendant, observed that the defendant had an extensive prior record involving fraud, and that her most recent conviction "was very serious conduct." Judge Shubb added that the sentence was meant to account for the profit and injury that identity theft crimes cause to real people: "We have to make it clear that crime doesn't pay."

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