

United States Department of Justice

**For Immediate Release**

May 28, 2010 **United States Attorney's Office**  
**Western District of Washington**

**Leader of Identity Theft and Bank Fraud Ring Sentenced to Prison  
Defendant Arranged Travel to Northwest for Ring Attempting Bank  
Account Takeovers**

ARMON LEON MAIDEN, 61, of Inglewood, California, was sentenced late yesterday to four years in prison and four years of supervised release for aggravated identity theft and bank fraud. MAIDEN led a bank fraud ring that traveled to Seattle in November 2008, to steal from individual bank accounts. At sentencing U.S. District Judge Thomas Zilly said the crime is serious and is an “invasion of privacy and dignity of the victims.... You clearly knew what you were doing and you organized others to help you.”

According to records in the case, MAIDEN and a number of co-conspirators arrived at Sea-Tac Airport on November 13, 2008. MAIDEN, the group leader, had provided his cohorts with fake checks and identity documents so that they could travel to banks and use the false identities to drain customer accounts. The co-conspirators tried to make a \$5,000 cash withdrawal from a customer account at a Wells Fargo Bank branch in Auburn, Washington, and four hours later, the co-conspirator tried to make another \$5,000 withdrawal from a different customer account at a Wells Fargo branch in Portland, Oregon. The next day, November 14, 2008, the ring attempted a third time to withdraw \$2,500 from another customer account at a Portland Wells Fargo branch. In each case, alert tellers refused to hand over the money. In all, the co-conspirators made six attempts to deposit phony checks and then withdraw money—twice they were able to withdraw funds—a total of \$3,400.

On the afternoon of November 14, 2008, MAIDEN and his cohorts returned to Sea-Tac to fly back to Long Beach, California. The last minute purchase of plane tickets for cash, resulted in two members of the group being sent for secondary screening. The two, Lamos Wayne Sturgis and Jodi Lynn Waller were arrested when alert screeners discovered multiple identity documents in 19 different names in their luggage. MAIDEN abandoned his plane ticket, left Sea-Tac, rented a car and drove home through the night to California. However, MAIDEN’s distinctive handwriting on checks and other papers associated with the scheme linked him to the crime. He was arrested on November 24, 2009. MAIDEN was indicted by the grand jury on December 2, 2009, and pleaded guilty on March 5, 2010.

In asking for the four-year sentence, Assistant United States Attorney Michael Scoville noted MAIDEN’s leadership role in the crime. “Maiden had to arrange plane flights, obtain photographs of his co-schemers in advance so they could be used in producing the fake driver’s licenses, get the insufficient funds checks that would be used in connection with the fake

identification documents, and put everything together in a ready-to-use form. This was not a spur-of-the-moment crime to satisfy a drug addiction, but a deliberate assault on the banking system, an assault fueled by greed,” Mr. Scoville wrote to the court.

In imposing the four-year sentence Judge Zilly told MAIDEN “You are 61 years old, and you have a long, troubling criminal history that has plagued you throughout your life.”

The case was investigated by the FBI and U.S. Secret Service. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Michael Scoville and Kurt Hermanns.