

U.S. Attorney Vaudreuil for Western District of Wisconsin: Madison man sentences to two years for passing counterfeit currency

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MADISON, WIS. — John W. Vaudreuil, United States Attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin, announced that Cornelius Stewart, 22, Madison, Wis., was sentenced yesterday by U.S. District Judge William Conley to two years in federal prison for passing counterfeit U.S. currency at numerous merchants in southern Wisconsin. Stewart pleaded guilty to this charge on November 21, 2016.

During January and February 2016, Stewart, along with four other co-defendants, traveled in groups to various cities from Baraboo to Janesville, passing counterfeit \$100 bills at restaurants and merchants. The group would make small-dollar purchases for which they would present the fake \$100 bills in order to receive a large amount of change in legitimate currency from the merchants.

The group was apprehended on February 23, 2016 by Janesville police officers during one such shopping spree, when they responded to merchant reports of the suspicious bills. Judge Conley noted that a term of imprisonment was especially warranted for Stewart because of his leadership role within the group, his previous state-level convictions for possessing and passing counterfeit currency, and his role in manufacturing the counterfeit bills. Stewart was also ordered to pay \$7,500 in restitution to the victimized merchants.

Stewart's co-defendants have all pleaded guilty to federal charges in this matter.

They are Danesha Phillips, 23, Dominique Gaunichaux, 19, Marlo Phillips, 19, and Parish Barbary-Wheatherby, 21, all of Madison. Danesha Phillips and Marlo Phillips will be sentenced on March 21, Gaunichaux on April 6, and Barbary-Wheatherby on April 28. Danesha Phillips and Marlo Phillips are sister and brother.

The charges in this case were the result of an investigation conducted by the Madison, Baraboo, Stoughton, Verona, Oregon, Fitchburg, Lake Delton, and Janesville Police Departments, as well as the Sauk County and Rock County Sheriffs' Offices, all in coordination with the U.S. Secret Service. The prosecution of the case has been handled by Assistant U.S. Attorney Robert A. Anderson.