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THREE DEFENDANTS SENTENCED FOR DEFRAUDING 93-YEAR-OLD

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November 16, 2011
<http://www.justice.gov/usao/gan/>

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One Defendant Committed Fraud from Prison

ATLANTA, GA - CARLOS GARCIA, 36, of Atlanta, Georgia, DANYEZ HINES, 21, of Manchester, Georgia, and SAMANTHA JOHNSON, 38, of Conyers, Georgia have been sentenced by United States District Judge Charles A. Pannell to federal prison on charges of bank fraud and aggravated identity theft.

"Identity theft has the potential to decimate its victims' bank accounts and credit history. These defendants targeted a 93-year-old woman and attempted to defraud her of her life savings. Thankfully, the victim and her family discovered the crime before the defendants were able to empty her bank accounts," said United States Attorney Sally Quillian Yates. "They exhibited a remarkable callousness toward the impact that their criminal conduct would have on their elderly victim."

"Identity theft has a huge financial and emotional impact on the individual victims involved and the American public as a whole. It is especially egregious when criminals target the elderly, one of the most vulnerable groups in our society. Those criminals who intentionally target the elderly should know that the U.S. Postal Inspection Service has aggressively investigated cases of identity theft for decades and will continue to do so to make sure justice is served. This case is a prime example of that commitment," said Keith Morris, Postal Inspector in Charge of the Atlanta Division.

GARCIA was sentenced to 6 years, 9 months in prison to be followed by 5 years of supervised release. He was ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$3,104.09. GARCIA was convicted of these charges on June 9, 2011, upon his plea of guilty.

HINES was sentenced on August 3, 2011, to 2 years, 10 months in prison to be followed by 5 years of supervised release. HINES was ordered to pay \$1,719.75 in restitution. HINES was convicted of these charges on May 25, 2011, upon his plea of guilty.

JOHNSON was sentenced on August 29, 2011, to 5 years, 10 months in prison to be followed by 5 years of supervised release. JOHNSON was ordered to pay \$3,104.09 in restitution. JOHNSON was convicted of these charges on June 9, 2011, upon her plea of guilty.

According to United States Attorney Yates, the charges and other information presented in court: In late January 2011, JOHNSON stole the wallet of a 93-year-old woman while she was shopping at a retail establishment in Conyers, Georgia. There JOHNSON found the victim's debit card for checking accounts at Georgia United Credit Union along with the personal identification number (PIN) for her debit card and account numbers and personal information that she would need to obtain information over the telephone about her accounts from the credit union.

JOHNSON shared the victim's debit card number, pin, account numbers and personal information with HINES and GARCIA. At the time GARCIA was incarcerated at Valdosta State Prison, having been convicted of identity theft and fraud in which he targeted elderly victims. Unfortunately, incarceration did not stand in the way of GARCIA participating in additional crimes. JOHNSON and HINES were able to communicate with GARCIA through a cell phone that had been smuggled to him in the prison. Using the victim's account numbers, debit card, PIN, and personal information, the defendants attempted through various means to obtain the more than \$120,000 in funds that were in the victim's accounts at the Georgia United Credit Union. GARCIA, using the cell phone smuggled to him in the prison, used the debit card number and PIN to wire transfer money from the victim's account to his prisoner account at Valdosta State Prison. HINES and JOHNSON ordered new checks for the account and directed that they be sent to HINES' grandmother's address. Once the checks arrived, HINES forged the victim's signature on checks and cashed them or gave them to others to cash for him. Using the personal information obtained from

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the victim's wallet, the defendants called the credit union, posed as the victim and transferred funds between accounts.

When the victim and her family discovered the fraud, they reported it to the credit union. The credit union froze the victim's accounts and deactivated the victim's debit card before a substantial loss occurred.

This case was investigated by the United States Postal Inspection Service.

Assistant United States Attorney William L. McKinnon, Jr. prosecuted the case.

For further information please contact Sally Q. Yates, United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is www.justice.gov/usao/gan.

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