

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **For Immediate Release**

October 28, 2009

### **Check Cashing Scam**

Sheriff Jimmy Harris reports the arrest of four individuals from the Atlanta area who were attempting to cash checks at local banks. The checks were presented as payroll from a local business. Bank officials notified Fyffe Police Chief Jake Fowler about questions they had concerning the checks. The checks were of very good quality and passed initial security measures. The individuals were detained by Chief Fowler, while DeKalb County Sheriff's Investigators arrived to determine the validity of the checks. The checks were determined to be forged documents which were given to these four individuals to be cashed for a fee. The four men were taken to the Sheriff's Office for questioning at which time it was determined this was part of a large-scale operation apparently based in the Atlanta, Georgia area. All four men were arrested and charged with Possession of a Forged Instrument 2<sup>nd</sup> Degree, which is a felony. Arrested were: Claude Derick Campbell, 36, Steven Darcy Beard, 49, Michael Edward Blalock, 51, and Anthony T. Peterson, 45, all of Atlanta. These individuals remain in the DeKalb County Detention Center.

Within the last 36 hours this investigation has led to Tennessee and Georgia, where this group is using similar methods to fraudulently get money from banks. All of these individuals are using a photo ID to cash the checks, so bank officials should be warned to make sure the accounts being accessed are valid and the checks are legitimate. If suspicions are raised, contact authorities. These attempts have been specific on certain business accounts and have been successful in our area for over \$17,000 in the last week. The checks recovered in these arrests totaled \$27,515.08. These individuals were given clothing and work items such as hard hats and reflective vests to make them appear to be workers cashing payroll checks. It is a well-organized group and they are moving through our area and the Southeast from Atlanta. These individuals being employed are primarily Black males who often have construction skills but are homeless. They are picked up as day laborers and used to carry out this fraud. Many are willing to take the risk because they are homeless. The group behind this operation is making a tremendous amount of money.

Anyone who has suspicious activity at their bank should contact authorities immediately but take no action which would endanger your employees or customers. Get all of the identification possible and let law enforcement handle the suspects. This investigation is continuing and federal authorities are working with local law enforcement on the case.

Sheriff Harris said, "These arrests were made possible because of alert bank employees and the quick response of Chief Fowler. Our investigators took the individuals into custody and determined the extent of this organization. Fort Payne Police Department Investigators assisted in this case and continue to work with us as we proceed."

