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BELLEROSE MAN WHO DEPOSITED STOLEN CHECKS INTO HIS BANK ACCOUNT
CHARGED WITH GRAND LARCENY
Faces up to 7 Years in Prison if Convicted

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced that Eduardo Soto is charged with grand larceny, criminal possession of a forged instrument and other crimes for depositing stolen and bogus checks totaling more than \$40,000 into his bank account. In July 2023, a Forest Hills resident noticed unauthorized transactions on his credit card account and discovered checks diverted before he ever received them in the mail. He filed a complaint with Congresswoman Grace Meng's office, which referred it to the Queens District Attorney's office leading to an investigation that revealed other victims and the arrest of Soto.

District Attorney Katz said: "With the help of Congresswoman Grace Meng, the US Postal Inspection Service and the NYPD, we were able to identify the defendant to hold him accountable for the serious charges against him. We will continue to aggressively prosecute fraudsters and work to educate the public on how to defend against these predators."

USPIS New York Division Inspector in Charge Daniel B. Brubaker said: "Criminals who steal mail to commit identity theft and check fraud violate the trust the American people place in the Postal Service and threaten the financial health of our communities. The arrest of Eduardo Soto is a win for the people of Queens, as he allegedly negotiated thousands of dollars in stolen checks for his own personal gain. Postal Inspectors will continue our strong relationship with the NYPD and the Queens District Attorney's Office to bring individuals who steal mail and prey on our communities swiftly to justice."

Soto, 42, of 241st Street in Bellerose, was arraigned on a 32-count criminal court complaint charging him with six counts of grand larceny in the third degree; six counts of criminal possession of stolen property in the third degree and one count in the fifth degree; eight counts of criminal possession of a forged instrument in the second degree; grand larceny in the fourth degree; criminal possession of stolen property in the fourth degree; petit larceny; and eight counts of unlawful possession of personal identification information in the third degree.

Soto faces up to seven years in prison if convicted. Judge Julieta Lozano ordered him to return to court May 13.

According to the charges:

- In July 2023, a 72-year-old Forest Hills man noticed two unauthorized convenience check transactions posted to his Mastercard account for \$4,850 and \$1,980. The blank checks were mailed to him by the credit card company for his potential use, but he never received them, nor did he authorize anyone else to cash them. The deposited checks were made payable to Eduardo Soto and purportedly signed by the victim. They were deposited into a Wells Fargo checking account belonging to the defendant.
- A 92-year-old Forest Hills resident, who had been waiting to receive a supply of checks in the mail, noticed checks for \$950, \$8,500, and \$4,750 made payable to Soto, with his own signature forged, and cashed against his account.
- Another victim, a 29-year-old Rego Park man, was awaiting a supply of checks from an investment account that he never received in the mail. He noticed two unauthorized checks made payable to Soto with his own purported signature posted to his account for \$9,869 and \$4,500.
- The third victim, a 54-year-old Elmhurst woman, noticed a convenience check for \$4,800 made out to Soto, with her signature forged, that would have cashed against her TD Bank credit card account.
- Video footage shows the defendant making deposits into his Wells Fargo account on dates matching the deposits of checks from at least two of the victims. Other checks were mobile deposited.

The investigation was conducted by US Postal Inspector Michael Loforte under the supervision of Ruben DelValle, Queens County US Postal Team Leader and Darnell Edwards, USPIS New York Division Assistant Inspector in Charge, and under the overall supervision of USPIS New York Division Inspector in Charge Daniel B. Brubaker, with the assistance of Detective James Tringali of the NYPD Financial Crimes Task Force under the supervision of Lieutenant Joseph DellaUniversita, and under the overall supervision of Inspector Igor Pinkhasov.

Assistant District Attorney Allison Wright, a Supervisor in the Major Economic Crimes Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Mary Lowenburg, Bureau Chief, Catherine Kane, Senior Deputy Bureau Chief, and Jonathan Scharf, Deputy Bureau Chief, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Gerard Brave.

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Criminal complaints and indictments are accusations. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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