

St. Louis County Woman Pleads Guilty For Her Role In Nigerian Romance Scam

March 4 2021 4:34 PM



ST. LOUIS –Trenice Hassel, 28, of St. Louis, Missouri, pleaded guilty to one count of making false statements to a federal agency. Hassel appeared, today, before United States District Court Judge Sarah E. Pitlyk.

On April 8, 2020, the United States Postal Inspection Service learned of a Romance Scam operating through the use of Post Office Box 34096 in Berkley, Missouri. The post office box account had been opened fraudulently by Hassel and B.M. using B.M.'s name and identification number. Through subsequent investigation, inspectors learned the scam had been operating since early 2019.

Hassel admitted that a co-defendant offered her \$100 if she could find someone who would open a post office box for him in that person's name. Consequently, Hassel asked B.M. to open the post office box using B.M.'s name and identification because she knew B.M. would not question why she was being asked to open a post office box.

On January 8, 2020, Hassel and B.M. entered the Berkeley post office where they completed PS Form 1093, titled "Application for Post Office Box Service." Hassel and B.M. made a material misrepresentation to the United States Postal Service by falsely claiming the post office box was being sought for B.M.'s residential and personal use, and that B.M. and Hassel were the only people authorized to pick up mail delivered to the rented post office box.

At the time B.M. and Hassel submitted the false and fraudulent application, Hassel knew neither she nor B.M. would use the post office box for their use, but instead the co-defendant would possess and control access to the rented post office box in connection with some type of illegal activity, the exact nature of which Hassel was unaware.

Hassell further admitted that after the representative for the United States Postal Service accepted B.M.'s application, B.M. was assigned Post Office Box 34096 and was provided with two keys for the post office box. When Hassel and B.M. exited the post office, they gave both keys to the co-defendant who paid the two women for fraudulently opening the post office box.

Between January 8, 2020 and June 4, 2020, the co-defendant collected, and attempted to collect, express mail delivered through the United States Postal Service to dozens of women who were deceived into mailing the proceeds of a Nigerian romance scam to fraudulently opened Post Office Box 34096 because they believed the money was being sent to B.M. who was employed as either a diplomat's secretary or as a realtor.

The United States Postal Inspection Service and the Federal Bureau of Investigation investigated the case. Assistant United States Attorney Tracy Berry is handling the case.