Second "Felony Lane Gang Member" Sentenced, Targeted Banks In Glen Carbon and Wood River

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EAST ST. LOUIS - The U.S. District Court in East St. Louis announced on Thursday that Mary M. Thornhill, 36, of Knoxville, Tenn., was sentenced on Wednesday, August 17, to 34 months in prison for her involvement in a bank fraud scheme that targeted female victims in Southern Illinois. The group targeted banks located in the Metro East, including those in Glen Carbon and Wood River.



In July 2021, Thornhill conspired with others to cash stolen checks and fraudulently obtain funds from financial institutions using stolen IDs — including driver's licenses — belonging to real individuals living in Southern Illinois.

Thornhill admitted that on July 19, 2021, she and Mills went to Regions Bank in Glen Carbon, and successfully cashed a check made payable to a person whose identity had been stolen. Thornhill and Mills were arrested by officers with the Glen Carbon Police Department within minutes of leaving Regions.

At the time of her guilty plea, Thornhill admitted that members of the conspiracy broke into vehicles parked in public places throughout Southern Illinois to steal valuables left in those vehicles, including purses and wallets containing IDs and checkbooks. After the thefts, members of the organization wrote checks from the stolen checkbooks made payable to other persons from whom the group had stolen identities.

Thornhill and her co-defendant, Delvin Mills, attempted to cash checks at local banks using the furthest lane of each bank's drive-up window to avoid detection by the tellers.

The "Felony Lane Gang" is a term used by law enforcement to describe individuals who use this particular tactic to defraud banks. Thornhill posed as the female victims and wore wigs or otherwise disguised herself to look more like the photos on the stolen IDs.

"This prosecution and well-deserved sentence is another example of this office's commitment to holding people who steal identities and commit related crimes accountable," said United States Attorney Rachelle Aud Crowe. "We understand that identity theft has serious consequences for victims and they deserve the full support of the criminal justice system. I thank all of the federal and local law enforcement agencies involved for their time and effort investigating this case."

In addition to the prison sentence, the court ordered Thornhill to pay restitution to her victims, a $200 fine, and spend three years on supervised release. Thornhill's co-conspirator, Delvin Mills, was sentenced on July 20, 2022, to 42 months in prison for his role in the conspiracy. Prior to arriving in Southern Illinois, Mills pleaded guilty to similar charges in the District of Oregon.

On July 14, 2022, Mills was sentenced in that district to 55 months in prison. According to the Judgment entered in the Southern District of Illinois, Mills' two federal sentences will run consecutively — for a total of 97 months in prison.

The investigation was conducted by local law enforcement agencies, including the Glen Carbon, Clinton County, Germantown, Belleville, New Baden, Salem, O’Fallon (IL.), Kirkwood, and St. Louis County Police Departments, along with the United States Secret Service, Fairview Heights Domicile Office of the Springfield Resident Office. Assistant United States Attorney Zoe J. Gross prosecuted the case.