



OFFICE OF THE STATE ATTORNEY



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Operation Checkmate: State Attorney's Office Announces Racketeering Arrests in Mail Thefts Involving Thousands of Palm Beach County victims

A criminal enterprise centered around stolen mail across Palm Beach County has been taken down after an investigation called "Operation Checkmate," announced the State Attorney's Office, the Delray Beach Police Department and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

Five individuals are accused of carrying out a racketeering scheme that began with the thefts of personal and business checks from thousands of victims. The perpetrators then 'washed' these checks and subsequently deposited the counterfeit checks – totaling hundreds of thousands of dollars – into the bank accounts of conspirators for later withdrawals or dispersals.

Jordan St. Val, 22, Dario Cadet, 24, Billy Cadet, 20, Joelson Gabrius, 24, and Mozelle Estica, 23 are charged with counts including Racketeering, Conspiracy to Commit Racketeering, and Fraudulent Use of Personal Identification and Theft.

The scheme: Using mail carrier keys that were obtained in robberies or by other means, the group would repeatedly open up bulk mail bins in the middle of the night and steal mail from Boca Raton to Delray Beach to Wellington. They targeted envelopes containing utility bill and credit card payments, and used methods to "wash" the checks by removing certain information.

Next, they changed the amount on the check and the payee. Usually the new payee on the check would be someone who agreed to let St. Val and the Cadets use their account to deposit the counterfeit checks. If and when the check cleared, the three would communicate with the bank account holder to pull out the stolen funds, to be shared. Gabrius and Estica are accused of allowing their accounts to be used to facilitate the scheme. More arrests are expected.

"These arrests are a credit to hard work by the Delray Beach Police and the Postal Inspection Service to stop this criminal enterprise and protect county citizens and their mail," State Attorney Dave Aronberg said. "Prosecutors will seek justice for the victims of this fraud."