



Department of Justice

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Four Charged in Crime Spree that Stole Vehicles, U.S. Mail and Robbed Postal Service Carriers

CLEVELAND – First Assistant U.S. Attorney Michelle M. Baepler announced that a federal grand jury returned a nine-count indictment charging Jaylen Harris, 19, of Beachwood, Ohio, Lavelle Jones, 18, of Warrenville Heights, Ohio, Devin Rice, 20, of Cleveland, Ohio, and Hakim Benjamin, 20, of Cleveland Heights, Ohio, with organizing and engaging in a conspiracy to steal, sell and purchase high-end vehicles, rob Postal Service carriers and steal from the U.S. mail.

Defendants Harris, Jones, Rice and Benjamin are each charged with conspiracy to commit sale or receipt of stolen vehicles and sale or receipt of stolen vehicles. Defendants Rice, Jones and Harris are charged with additional counts of possession of stolen mail. Defendant Rice is also charged with aiding and abetting the robbery of a postal carrier and stealing keys adopted by the Post Office. Defendant Harris is charged with an additional count of illegal possession of a machine gun.

According to court documents, from December 2021 to February 2022, the defendants are accused of stealing and purchasing high-end vehicles from car dealerships in Michigan and transporting the vehicles to be sold in the Northern District of Ohio. The indictment states that the defendants targeted specific vehicles to steal and purchase, including the Dodge Durango, Dodge Ram TRX, Dodge Hellcat, Audi 8 and others.

In addition to the car theft conspiracy, Defendants Rice, Jones and Harris are charged with organizing and engaging in a conspiracy to rob Postal Service carriers, steal Postal Service mail keys and illegally obtain mail from Postal Service collection boxes.

Court documents state that the defendants sought to obtain Postal Service collection box keys from mail carriers in order to steal checks and other items of value from the U.S. mail. It is alleged that the defendants would often rob mail carriers of their collection box keys while on duty and then pull checks and other items of value from the mail.

On January 31, 2022, Defendant Rice was arrested by law enforcement authorities after committing robbery and assault of a Postal Service carrier. During the arrest, it is alleged that Rice was found to be in possession of various pieces of stolen mail.

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On February 10, 2022, a search warrant was executed at a hotel where Defendants Harris and Jones were residing. During the search, authorities obtained multiple pieces of stolen mail and a firearm belonging to Harris that was modified to fire as a machinegun.

Court records state that as a result of the various schemes, the defendants caused an estimated potential loss of \$2,700,000.

An indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. The defendants are entitled to a fair trial in which it is the government's burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

If convicted, the defendants' sentence will be determined by the court after a review of factors unique to this case, including prior criminal record, if any, role in the offenses, and the characteristics of the violation.

In all cases, the sentence will not exceed the statutory maximum, and in most cases, it will be less than the maximum.

This case was investigated by the FBI, United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS), Ohio State Highway Patrol, Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles, Cuyahoga County Criminal Investigators, Beachwood Police Department and Shaker Heights Police Department. This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Kathryn G. Andrachik and Jason W. White.

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