



Hernando County Sheriff's Office

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Media Release

From: Denise M. Moloney
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Re: Local Bank Employee Detects Fraudulent Bank Account

Date: November 25, 2019

On 11-01-19, the Hernando County Sheriff's Office Economic Crimes Unit received information from an astute Brannen Bank employee that a male suspect, later identified as **William Brown Jr. DOB/ 4/25/1979**, had opened a fraudulent bank account with Brannen Bank. The suspect used a counterfeit driver's license with his picture and the personal identification information of an unknowing victim. This suspect had deposited \$5000 via direct deposit into the newly created account.

While investigating this direct deposit, it was discovered that the deposit originated from a loan obtained from another local lending institution in the amount of \$8,000. The loan was obtained by using the same victim's information as was on the Brannen Bank account.

After making contact with the original lender, an employee of this financial institution described a similar suspicious loan application in the amount of \$5,000 from another male, later identified as **Leroy Stevenson DOB/ 9/29/1977**. The lending institution believed that the loan application was fraudulent, involving another unknowing victim's personal identification information. This employee alerted detectives that this applicant would be arriving momentarily with what appeared to be a counterfeit driver's license.

As detectives waited, Brown arrived driving a 2017 Lincoln sedan with passenger Stevenson. Brown dropped Stevenson off at the lending institution, while Brown parked across the parking lot to wait. Detectives simultaneously took Brown and Stevenson into custody, along with the Lincoln sedan. Brown and Stevenson were each subsequently arrested for Organized Fraud, Criminal Use of Personal Identification Information and Grand Theft.

It was discovered during interviews that the suspects had purchased the counterfeit driver's licenses and personal identification information on the Dark Web.

On 11-20-19, a search warrant was conducted on the Lincoln sedan, at which time additional personal identification information from additional victims was located within the interior of the vehicle. Among the contraband was 10 additional counterfeit driver licenses with the suspect's photos and victim's personal information.

Additional charges are pending.

The Office of Sheriff:

The Office of the Sheriff is established by the Florida Constitution. As a constitutional officer, the Sheriff has the exclusive authority to administer his or her agency and is responsible for preserving the peace throughout the entire county, carrying out the laws of the state, the orders of Florida courts, and the ordinances of the Board of County Commissioners. The Sheriff is the chief law enforcement and correctional officer of the county.

Sheriff Al Nienhuis was initially appointed as the Sheriff of Hernando County by the Governor in January of 2011. He was then elected by the people of Hernando County in 2012, ran unopposed in 2016, and remains accountable to them.