



U.S. Department of Justice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 29, 2020

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PRESS RELEASE

**BROOKLYN MAN ARRESTED FOR STEALING U.S. MAIL, INCLUDING
GOVERNMENT STIMULUS CHECKS**

A criminal complaint was filed today in federal court in Brooklyn charging Feng Chen with theft of mail, including credit cards, multiple checks and nine Economic Impact Payments ("EIP") from the United States Treasury Department, otherwise known as "stimulus payments." Chen was arrested yesterday and will make his initial appearance via videoconference this afternoon before United States Chief Magistrate Judge Cheryl L. Pollak.

Richard P. Donoghue, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, Philip R. Bartlett, Inspector-in-Charge, United States Postal Inspection Service, New York Division (USPIS), J. Russell George, Treasury Office of Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA), and Dermot F. Shea, Commissioner, New York City Police Department (NYPD), announced the arrest.

"For many families, these stimulus checks are a lifeline in these difficult times and anyone who tries to cut that lifeline will face the full weight of the law," stated United States Attorney Donoghue. "This Office will vigorously prosecute all those who seek to take advantage of the public health crisis. I commend the NYPD police officers for their truly outstanding work and service under difficult conditions."

Mr. Donoghue urged the public to report suspected fraud related to COVID-19 (the Coronavirus) by calling the National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) hotline (1-866-720-5721) or to the NCDF e-mail address disaster@leo.gov. For information on how to identify or report fraud involving Economic Impact Payments, visit tips.tigta.gov.

"The COVID-19 crisis has placed tremendous stress on underserved communities across this country. The Economic Impact Payments are, in many cases, the lifeline needed by these individuals to stay afloat during this crisis. When Mr. Chen stole these checks, he robbed recipients of these much needed funds. Postal Inspectors and their law enforcement partners

have no tolerance for the theft of mail, especially during these unprecedented times”, stated USPIS Inspector-in-Charge Bartlett.

“The Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) is the agency responsible for protecting the integrity of the Internal Revenue Service, including the theft of Economic Impact Payments. We are committed to working with our law enforcement partners to investigate any individual that engages in criminal activity to victimize taxpayers and exploit this national crisis for their own benefit,” stated TIGTA George.

“The NYPD recognizes how the COVID-19 pandemic presents an opportunity for a variety of malicious, criminal scams. In this case, I applaud our alert detectives and federal partners for interrupting an alleged scheme to victimize New Yorkers by stealing important mail and stimulus money meant to aid them during this unprecedented crises,” stated NYPD Commissioner Shea.

According to the complaint and statements made in court, in the early morning hours of April 28, 2020 in Sunset Park, New York, NYPD police officers observed Chen look inside the medical collection bin at a closed medical office and then walk to a nearby residential building and examine mail left at the door. Chen then walked into the gated area of a second residential building and left carrying what appeared to be mail. Chen saw the police officers and tossed mail on the sidewalk. The officers exited their vehicle and observed a bulge in Chen’s jacket pocket. The officers searched Chen and recovered checks, EIPs totaling more than \$12,000, credit cards, opened envelopes and letters bearing the names of various individuals and mail addresses.

The charge in the complaint is an allegation, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty. If convicted, Chen faces a maximum of five years’ imprisonment.

The government’s case is being handled by the Office’s General Crimes Section. Assistant United States Attorney Andrew D. Grubin is in charge of the prosecution.

The Defendant:

FENG CHEN
Age: 31
Brooklyn, New York

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 20-MJ-337