



## PRESS RELEASE

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Three Men Sentenced to Federal Prison after Armed Robbery of a Columbia Postal Carrier

**Washington, D.C.** – Three men have been sentenced to federal prison for their roles in the March 17, 2022, armed robbery of a United States Postal Service (USPS) letter carrier in downtown Columbia, SC.

On August 23, 2023, U.S. District Judge Mary Lewis Geiger sentenced Don “Pop” Everett Peters, 21, to seven years in prison. Shylik “Mitch” Lamont Smalls, 22, and Elijah “Smoke” Rasue Dewayne Ellis, 21, were each sentenced to six years in prison. Following their prison terms, each will be on supervised release for three years. There is no parole in the federal system.

Each of the three men had pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit armed robbery of a USPS letter carrier, assault/armed robbery of a USPS letter carrier, and theft/possession of a USPS Arrow key. Peters and Smalls also pleaded guilty to theft/possession of U.S. Mail.

Evidence presented in court showed that on the afternoon of March 17, 2022, after surveilling another letter carrier in the Hollywood-Rose Hill/Rosewood area of Columbia, the trio decided to rob a letter carrier making his rounds on Hollywood Drive. While Peters waited in the getaway car, Smalls and Ellis—while wearing masks—approached the carrier. Ellis pointed a gun at the carrier and demanded his keys. Peters then picked up the two co-conspirators, and they fled the area.

After an extensive investigation, including review of numerous surveillance cameras and interviewing witnesses, postal inspectors and our investigative partners linked the getaway vehicle to Peters. After a review of Peters’ prior encounters with law enforcement and cell phone records, postal inspectors linked Smalls to Peters. They determined that Smalls matched the description of one of the robbers, that both Smalls and Peters had access to firearms, and that Smalls was in possession of clothing matching the description of the clothing worn by one of the robbers.

Search warrants were obtained for Peters’ and Smalls’ apartments, as well as their vehicles, and executed on May 4, 2022. Smalls was found with the stolen Arrow key in his pants pocket. Postal inspectors and our partners also recovered stolen mail; check-making materials; several electronic devices, such as cell phones and laptops; and two privately made firearms, which are commonly known as “ghost guns.” One ghost gun was found in Peters’ bedroom and the other in Smalls’ bedroom. Inside Peters’ car, inspectors found documentation belonging to Ellis.

After waiving their rights, both Peters and Smalls admitted to being involved in the robbery, along with Ellis. Peters and Smalls were placed under arrest, and a warrant was issued for Ellis. On May 31, 2022, Ellis was arrested in Valdosta, GA, where he was found in possession of a “ghost gun” and a quantity of marijuana. After advice of rights, Ellis admitted to being involved in the robbery with Peters and Smalls. All three have been in custody since their 2022 arrests.



# UNITED STATES POSTAL INSPECTION SERVICE

"The sentences imposed in this case exemplify the unending dedication of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service to protect the employees of the United States Postal Service," said Tommy D. Coke, Inspector in Charge of the Atlanta Division of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. "When our employees are victims of robberies and assaults, we do not stop until we identify those responsible. We extend our appreciation to the U.S. Attorney's Office and our law enforcement partners for their support in this case."

"Make no mistake. We will bring all of our federal resources to bear when our postal carriers are robbed," said U.S. Attorney Adair F. Boroughs. "Postal carriers are an integral part of our communities, and we are thankful for the residents who provided critical information as a part of this investigation and those who stood by the carrier at the sentencing hearing."

The Postal Inspection Service thanks the Columbia Police Department for their assistance in this case, the U.S. Marshals Fugitive Task Force, and the Lowndes County, GA, Sheriff's Office for their assistance. The Postal Inspection Service would also like to thank the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of South Carolina and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Stacey D. Haynes and Lamar Fyall for prosecuting the case.

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