



Department of Justice

United States Attorney Stephen R. Wigginton
Southern District of Illinois

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10, 2011
WWW.JUSTICE.GOV/USAO/ILS/

CONTACT: James L. Porter
PHONE: (618) 628-3700

STOCKTON, CALIFORNIA WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO CONSPIRACY TO DEFRAUD

A California woman pled guilty in the United States District Court in East St. Louis, Ill., on March 9, 2011, for conspiracy to defraud, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of Illinois, Stephen R. Wigginton, announced today. Catherine Sims, age 24, a resident of Stockton, California, was charged with one count of conspiracy to defraud. Sims faces the following maximum penalties: imprisonment of 5 years; a fine of \$250,000; supervised release of 3 years; and a special assessment of \$100. Sims is scheduled to be sentenced on June 10, 2011.

According to court documents, Sims pled guilty to conspiring to commit mail fraud, wire fraud, and falsely assuming the identity of an employee of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). The charges alleged that Sims conspired with Michael Ronell Ussery, Jr., to defraud a federal inmate confined in southern Illinois. Ussery provided the inmate with Sims's home telephone number, telling him that this was the number for DEA Agent "Edwards." During several telephone conversations, Sims represented to the inmate that she was a DEA Secretary and gave the inmate false information that he could obtain sentence reductions by participating in and funding DEA undercover operations. As a result of the conspiracy, the inmate gave Ussery small, staggered payments totaling \$36,500.00. Neither Sims nor Ussery acted with any authority under DEA.

Sims's co-conspirator, Ussery, pled guilty to charges of conspiracy to defraud, mail fraud, and wire fraud in November 2009. In March 2010, the district court sentenced Ussery to 61 months' imprisonment.

This case was investigated by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of the Inspector General, and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. The case is assigned to Assistant United States Attorney Liam Coonan.

###