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NEWS RELEASE –

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RINGLEADER IN STOLEN MAIL/COUNTERFEIT CHECKS/DRUG RING SENTENCED Most co-defendants previously pleaded guilty to various charges

One of the ringleaders of an alleged stolen mail/counterfeit checks/drugs ring operating in the Denver area indicted last year by a Denver Grand Jury was sentenced yesterday.

Sean Jones (dob: 03-18-1981) pleaded guilty to the main count of violation of the *Colorado Organized Crime Control Act-COCCA* (F2) on January 19 and was sentenced yesterday to 14 years in prison, followed by five years mandatory parole. The prison sentence is to run consecutively to all other cases for which the defendant is currently serving (Jones was sentenced to 10 years in prison in Arapahoe County last April for a similar scheme in that jurisdiction). \$78,792 in restitution will also be ordered.

Jones and 10 others were charged in a 186-count May 2017 indictment after a months-long investigation and collaboration by the Denver District Attorney's Economic Crime Unit, Denver Police Department, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, Colorado Bureau of Investigation, Black Hawk Police Department, FBI Rocky Mountain Safe Streets Task Force, Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office and Jefferson County Sheriff's Office.

Alleged co-ringleader **Kathleen Cooke** (dob: 04-27-1969) is scheduled to be arraigned on March 23. She, like Jones, was charged with one count of violation of the *Colorado Organized Crime Control Act-COCCA* (F2). Jones, Cooke and nine fellow co-defendants were additionally variously charged with multiple counts of other felonies, including *conspiracy to commit identify theft* (F5), *identity theft* (F4), *forgery* (F5), *theft* (F5, F6), *criminal attempt to commit theft* (F6), *criminal possession of a financial device* (F5) and *criminal impersonation* (F6).

Co-defendant **Alan Mill** (dob: 12-27-1983) pleaded guilty to identity theft (F4) last November and was sentenced February 22 to 10 years in prison. The remaining co-defendants have variously pleaded guilty to felony identity theft or forgery and added counts of misdemeanor theft, and sentenced to county jail sentences, community corrections, suspended prison sentences upon condition of successful completion of probation, or deferred judgments concurrent with probation, and/or ordered to pay varying amounts of restitution.

The indictment charged that beginning in April 2016 Jones and Cooke led a criminal racketeering enterprise to steal mail (aka "schwack" in street slang) containing identifying information and personal and business checks, used victims' identities and altered, made and distributed stolen and/or counterfeit checks, using computers, computer programs, forgery devices and other tools to generate the counterfeit and/or altered checks, which checks were then cashed or attempted to be cashed at numerous banks and credit unions in the Denver area. The defendants bought, sold, traded and bartered among each other the stolen personal and financial information and checks in exchange for drugs, mostly methamphetamine and heroin, and also bought, sold and traded the drugs among themselves.

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The defendants collectively stole more than \$100,000 while committing ID theft, forgery, and theft at financial institutions, utilizing the stolen personal and financial information and/or financial devices of more than 400 people and business entities.

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The filing of a criminal charge is merely a formal accusation that an individual(s) committed a crime(s) under Colorado laws. A defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty. See Colo. RPC 3.6