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MADIGAN ANNOUNCES CHARGES AGAINST COUNTERFEIT TICKET RING

Attorney General Charges 16 Defendants in Fake Ticket Scheme for Games & Events at Soldier Field, United Center & Allstate Arena

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced charges against 16 defendants for a wide-ranging counterfeit ticket scheme for games, events and concerts at Chicago's Soldier Field and United Center and the Allstate Arena in Rosemont.

Madigan charged the defendants in Cook County Circuit Court with forgery, a Class 3 felony. Madigan alleged the scheme was initiated by making and printing counterfeit tickets for major games and events, including Chicago Bears, Bulls, and Blackhawks' games, WWE Extreme Wrestling and Disney on Ice. The Attorney General alleged that the defendants then sold the tickets through the website Craigslist and completed the sales by meeting with victims at area coffee shops or restaurants to exchange the tickets for cash. The victims discovered the purchased tickets were counterfeit when they attempted to enter the events with the fraudulent tickets.

"Today's sweep is a coordinated effort between my office and our federal and state law enforcement partners," Madigan said. "The charges against the defendants allege they operated a widespread counterfeit operation to defraud people seeking to attend some of Chicago's most popular events."

Madigan's office charged the following defendants with forgery: Lamont Flowers, 20; Labron Gray, 39; Nathaniel Gray, 24; Mitchell Hazzard, 36; Dionte Johnson, 20; Rashawn Mays, 20; Darrick McClinton, 33; Kenneth McCullough, 19; Joseph McKnight, 26; Russell Merritt, 36; David Metcalf, 25; Marcus Moore, 19; Mark Morrison, 24; Jason Peters, 24; Rodney Pole, 25; and Lionel Robinson, 34.

Eight defendants are in police custody and arrest warrants were issued for the remaining defendants. The arrests were made by the Chicago Police Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which investigated and referred the case to Madigan's office for prosecution.

"Today is another great example of cooperation between federal and local partners working together and to remind the public to be cautious and vigilant when purchasing tickets," said FBI Chicago Special Agent in Charge Michael Anderson.

The targets of this investigation are documented gang members, according to the Chicago Police Department. The investigation represents the CPD's latest effort to target organized gang activity.

"This ticket scheme provided the finances to fuel the engine of violence that has plagued Chicago communities for far too long," said Chicago Police Interim Superintendent John J. Escalante. "We are unwavering in our commitment to keep our neighborhoods safe and will continue to leverage the full weight of our federal and state partners to send a very clear message that gang activity and subsequent gun violence will not be tolerated."

Representatives from Soldier Field, the United Center and Allstate Arena assisted the FBI and CPD in their investigation.

Assistant Attorneys General Albert Berry and John Greenwood are handling the cases for Madigan's Special Prosecutions Bureau.

The public is reminded that the defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

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