



The Ultimate Inside Job: ITAC Data Used to Bust Ring that Racked up \$2.5 Million in Credit Card Charges

The case started with a call to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service in Los Angeles. The Social Security Administration (SSA) had flagged an employee in the Los Angeles who had accessed the computer system 4,000 times within a 15-month period.

The phone call set into a motion a series of events that would lead to the arrest of former Social Security Administration employee Jennifer Batiste, 45, and her cohort, Craig Harris, 50, both of Los Angeles.

U.S. Postal Inspection Service investigators contacted major credit card issuers to determine if the accessed records could be linked to fraudulent accounts. Meanwhile, the intelligence unit in Washington ran the numbers through the Financial Crimes Database. (ITAC contributes case data to the database on a monthly basis).

By cross checking information from ITAC and other sources, investigators were able to link 700 of the 4,000 queries to fraudulent cards with an estimated loss of \$2.5 million. Baptiste agreed to participate in a sting operation where she met Harris in a bank parking lot near the SSA Building. Harris had money and the names of individuals on him when he was arrested.

The California Attorney General argued Harris would give Batiste some identifying piece of information about an individual, such as a social security number, and Batiste would then access the government system to get enough additional information to put the person's identity at risk.

Batiste was paid \$20 for every search query she ran on the government computer to gain information for Harris. They are both awaiting sentencing on charges of conspiracy, among others.

The Postal Inspection Service is part of the Los Angeles Identity Theft Economic Crimes Task Force, which also includes the U.S. Secret Service, the Los Angeles Police Department, and the Social Security Administration's Office of the Inspector General.