

## Fraud in the U.S. Marshals Service

Written by Nick Sanders

Wednesday, 18 May 2011 00:00

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As our long-time readers know, we often point out that lax internal controls and poor segregation of duties take place within the U.S. Government as well as within government contractors. It's just that fraud and abuse perpetrated by contractor employees makes for a better sound bite. Seemingly nobody cares especially much about Government employees—or military servicepersons—who steal directly from taxpayers (or from their fellow service members). But here's *yet another* story about lax internal controls within the U.S. Government, and how a government employee was able to take advantage of the lax control environment to steal more than \$100,000.

Ms. Sno Rush, age 40, residing in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, was employed by the U.S. Marshals Service (USMS) as an “administrative officer” in the District of Columbia Superior Court. According to this Dept. of Justice [press release](#), Ms. Rush's duties included “handling payroll-related matters for the USMS, authorizing payment to USMS employees and outside entities, drafting and signing U.S. Treasury checks for USMS expenditures, and directing and supervising other USMS employees to draft and sign such checks.”

Okay. Let's stop right there and look at that quote detailing Ms. Rush's responsibilities. She both *drafted and signed* checks payable to outside entities, and supervised other employees as they both drafted and signed checks. In addition, she both “handled” payroll-related matters *and* authorized payments to employees. Yeah. We know where this is going, don't we?

Hopefully, none of our readers think this commingling of what are properly severable responsibilities is a good thing. In fact, it's pretty much about as lax as you'd ever want to see, isn't it?

So how did Ms. Rush—and we're going to call her “Sno” for the rest of this article—handle the temptation provided by the lax control environment at the Superior Court in which she worked? Not well. Not well at all.

According to the DOJ announcement—

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Rush admitted that between April 2006 and February 2009, she unlawfully used a USMS credit card for personal expenses totaling approximately \$15,000. In addition, Rush admitted creating a fictitious employee in the USMS payroll system and submitting falsified time-and-attendance records for the employee, resulting in fraudulent payments totaling \$31,000 between November 2007 and October 2008, which Rush converted to her personal use. Rush also admitted that between June 2007 and November 2008, she caused to be issued \$51,000 in U.S. Treasury checks to pay down the balance on a personal credit card, disguising the theft with fraudulent business invoices she created to make the payments appear legitimate. According to the plea agreement, Rush converted an additional \$7,000 in U.S. Treasury checks used to pay the balance on another personal credit card. In total, Rush admitted stealing approximately \$104,000 in USMS funds.

So, Sno pretty much took advantage of every opportunity she saw, didn't she?

Let's enumerate:

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She created a fictitious employee and submitted false timekeeping records for that fictitious employee. That "ghost" employee received \$31,000 in wages, which she pocketed.

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She generated \$58,000 in fraudulent checks that was used to pay down her personal credit card balances.

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She ran up \$15,000 in inappropriate personal expenses on her government purchase card.

We don't know how Sno was caught—which would have been helpful. But we do know that she was caught and pleaded guilty. For her transgressions, Sno was sentenced to 21 months in prison and will be making full restitution (somehow).

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In the meantime, we wonder what *other* USMS employees are getting away with?