



DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

News Release

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HAWAII WELFARE FRAUD DEFENDANT NABBED IN VIRGINIA

HONOLULU-Attorney General Mark Bennett announced today that: On January 22, 2004, former Honolulu resident Natasha Ewing, also known as Natasha Charles, Natasha Gantt, Tosha Gantt, Natasha Rombowa, and Natasha Ogunlade, was arrested in Virginia on an Oahu grand jury indictment returned on October 9, 2002.

The indictment charges Ms. Ewing, 25, with one count of theft in the second degree and one count of theft in the first degree for fraudulently obtaining public assistance benefits in 1997 and between 1991 and 2001.

Ms. Ewing was apprehended when she was riding as a passenger in a motor vehicle that tried to enter Norfolk Naval Station via gate 3A.

The Department of the Attorney General wishes to acknowledge the efforts of Police Corporal Gilbert Morris, 38, whose questioning and attention to detail resulted in the identification and apprehension of Natasha Ewing.

Ms. Ewing will be returned to the State of Hawaii to stand trial.

An indictment is an accusation only and Ms. Ewing is presumed innocent until proven guilty at trial. Theft in the first degree is a class "B" felony punishable by up to ten years in prison and by a fine of up to \$25,000 or twice the value of the property stolen whichever is greater.

Theft in the second degree is a class "C" felony punishable by up to five years in prison and by a fine of up to \$10,000 or twice the value of the property stolen whichever is greater.

The State of Hawaii is tough on welfare fraud. Every year more than 100 defendants are successfully prosecuted for felony offenses related to welfare fraud and more than 800 individuals are administratively sanctioned for intentional program violations. The criminal prosecution of welfare fraud cases saves the state millions of dollars annually.

Anyone having information concerning welfare fraud should call the Welfare Fraud Hotline at (808) 587-8444.

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