



INSPECTOR GENERAL REPORT

2009-07-0133

December 16, 2010

BMV TITLING FORGERY

Inspector General David O. Thomas, after an investigation by Special Agent Mark Mitchell, reports as follows:

This investigation involved forgery by a Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) employee (“Employee”) of the signature of a seller on an out of state title. This case was reported to the OIG by the BMV. Employee’s motive in the forgery was to illegally assist an individual (“Buyer”) in acquiring an Indiana title for a watercraft Buyer alleged he had purchased in Michigan.

The BMV investigative unit reported this case to the OIG. BMV Investigator James Bube was assisted by OIG Special Agent Mark Mitchell in the investigation.

The investigation revealed that initially Buyer unsuccessfully attempted to title and register two watercrafts at the Bedford BMV branch in Lawrence County, Indiana. One watercraft had allegedly been purchased over the internet from an individual in Michigan, and the second watercraft was purchased by Buyer from an individual in Bloomington, Indiana.

For the first watercraft, Buyer presented a bill of sale dated May 25, 2009

to the Bedford BMV branch. This bill of sale, however, was for an earlier transaction and showed another seller's name and the purchaser's name as [John Doe]¹, the alleged seller of the watercraft to Buyer. A photograph of the craft, and a police officer inspection affidavit were also presented by Buyer. Buyer was then told by the Bedford BMV branch employee that since the watercraft was registered in Michigan, Indiana law² required that he would have to produce a Michigan title or other proof of ownership before an Indiana title and registration could be issued for this watercraft. Buyer left the BMV branch.

It was at this point that Employee, a separate BMV employee and friend of Buyer, forged the bill of sale to assist Buyer in obtaining the title from the BMV.

With the forged title by Employee, Buyer on June 12, 2009, then visited the Paoli BMV branch in Orange County, Indiana. Buyer presented the bill of sale which had been changed and forged by Employee and Buyer. The forged bill of sale now showed [John Doe] as the seller and Buyer as the purchaser. The bill of sale had also been changed from the date of May 25 to May 28 of 2009. The state of registration had also been changed from Michigan to Kansas. Since the Paoli branch was unaware of the forgery and the events that had transpired a few days earlier at the Bedford BMV branch, this branch issued an application for a certificate of title to Buyer for the Michigan watercraft.

Employee was interviewed by BMV Investigator James Bube. BMV

¹ The name John Doe is used in this report to protect a potential victim and prevent identity theft. The name used was either an earlier seller or a fictitious person, but in any event, outside the most recent purchasing transaction.

² These titling requirements, although at times burdensome, are well-designed to prevent the trafficking of stolen property.

Investigator Bube told Employee that Employee was free to leave and did not have to answer his questions. Employee answered Bube's questions and admitted to these acts. Employee told BMV Investigator Bube that Buyer was a friend and Employee was trying to help Buyer since Employee knew Buyer was having difficulty getting the two watercrafts titled and registered. Employee admitted that Employee changed the bill of sale that Buyer had taken to the Paoli branch. Employee then also admitted that Employee illegally renewed the registration for the other watercraft in the former owner's name.

The results of the investigation were submitted to the Lawrence County Prosecuting Attorney. Criminal charges of forgery and official misconduct were then filed against Employee in December of 2010.

Dated this 16th day of December, 2010.



David O. Thomas, Inspector General