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COMBATING MAIL THEFT AND LETTER CARRIER ROBBERIES STRATEGY

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MARCH 2024



UNITED STATES POSTAL INSPECTION SERVICE

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

A MESSAGE FROM THE POSTMASTER GENERAL

The mission of the United States

Postal Service ("Postal Service") is to bind all Americans across our nation through trusted, safe, and secure communications and services. A critical part of that mission includes protecting our customers, employees, and infrastructure



from criminal activity and securing the mail from criminal misuse and attack.

The Postal Service has

recently experienced

a significant increase

in mail theft and

associated violent

crimes directed at

letter carriers. The

Louis DeJoy, Postmaster General

Postal Service shares the concerns of its customers and employees, Congress, and the American public about this increased criminal activity.

All Postal Service employees are entitled to a safe workplace, and all Postal Service customers deserve the secure delivery of their mail. At every level of this agency, we are committed to ensuring the safety of our employees, as well as ensuring safe and secure mail delivery. Our law enforcement and security arm, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service ("Postal Inspection Service"), leads our efforts in this mission by investigating and arresting criminals who commit mail theft and attack our employees. The Postal Inspection Service also collaborates with the Postal Service to implement enhanced security measures to prevent these crimes from occurring.

The Postal Service and the Postal Inspection Service are fully committed to the strategy articulated in this document. As it has done throughout its history, the Postal Service is taking all practicable measures to ensure the safety of Postal Service employees, to safeguard the nation's mail, and to provide the best, most efficient service possible to the American public.



INTRODUCTION

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF POSTAL INSPECTOR

increased attack by

criminals seeking to

perpetrate financial

crimes utilizing stolen

mail. In response, the

significantly increased

employees and the mail

they carry. The Postal

our efforts to protect

both Postal Service

Postal Inspection Service has

The Postal Inspection Service's

highest priority is and has always been the protection of Postal Service employees. Recently, Postal Service employees have come under



Gary Barksdale, Chief Postal Inspector

Inspection Service takes a holistic approach to this, collaborating with the Postal Service to enhance the physical security of mail receptacles, increase awareness among Postal Service employees on how to remain safe while at work, increase awareness among the public of strategies to protect their mail, and focus on high-impact investigations into attacks on Postal Service employees and associated mail theft. This approach relies on close cooperation across the Postal Service, as well as with local, state, and federal law enforcement partners, including the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General. It also relies upon important public-private partnerships, such as with the financial industry.

We have already made significant progress in implementing the strategy outlined in this document, and we will continue to follow the blueprint laid out in these pages to ensure a successful, enterprise-wide approach to protect Postal Service employees and secure the mail. As we face this current challenge and challenges to come, the Postal Inspection Service is focused on and committed to preserving and protecting the integrity of the U.S. Mail.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Combating mail theft and violent crimes targeting postal employees is of the higher

priority for the Postal Service and the Postal Inspection Service. As the law enforcement arm of the Postal Service, the Postal Inspection Service leads the Postal Service's efforts to protect all postal employees, including letter carriers, and ensure the secure delivery of mail to the American public.

This Combating Mail Theft and Letter Carrier Robberies Strategy (hereinafter the "Strategy") is designed to guide decision making, coordination, and resource allocation throughout the Postal Inspection Service and the Postal Service. This Strategy aims to protect postal employees and the American public by securing the Postal Service delivery network from criminal attack, disrupting mail theft and violent crimes against postal employees, and implementing prevention strategies that empower postal employees and the American public.

The Postal Inspection Service employs a wholeof-government approach that relies heavily on



S	interagency cooperation—specifically with our partners					
est	in the Department of Justice, the U.S. Postal Service					
	Office of Inspector General, and other federal, state,					
	and local law enforcement partners. Working with these					
า	partners and with all of the Postal Service, the Postal					
	Inspection Service will achieve the					
	following goals:					

- **1.** Enhance Delivery Security
- **2.** Advance Intelligence-Led Investigations
- **3.** Deploy Communications and Increase Prevention Awareness
- 4. Invest in Tools, Technology, and Data Analytics
- 5. Deploy Advanced Training

The Postal Service is always working to earn the trust of the American public. The Postal Inspection Service plays a key role in maintaining that trust by protecting Postal Service employees, the American people, and the sanctity of the U.S. Mail.

This Strategy is a living document that will evolve in response to the changing nature of mail theft and violent crime targeting postal workers.

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BACKGROUND

BACKGROUND

Beginning around 2020, and continuing to present date, the Postal Service has experienced a significant increase in mail theft from mail receptacles, primarily due to financially motivated crimes like check fraud. This is evidenced by a 139% increase in reports of high-volume mail theft from mail receptacles between Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 and FY 2023, with 20,574 reports in FY 2019 and 49,146 reports in FY 2023. The significant rise in mail theft and associated financial crimes appears to be driven by organized criminal groups who have shifted their focus towards the perpetration of low-risk, high-reward financial crimes. This is evidenced by Postal Inspection Service investigations, Department of Treasury data, and data from financial industry sources. Although there is no single cause for this shift, it likely is due in part to mass pandemic relief fraud perpetrated during the Covid-19 pandemic, cyber-enabled techniques that facilitate the perpetration of financial crime, and a lax prosecutorial climate for property and financial crimes in some U.S. jurisdictions.

Prior to 2020, mail theft from mail receptacles was primarily perpetrated through forced entry or using fishing devices. However, that shifted as the Postal Service and the Postal Inspection Service strengthened the physical security of blue collection boxes. These efforts included employing anti-fishing devices, high-security collection boxes (HSCBs), and modified arrow locks (MALs). Despite physical security enhancements, blue collection boxes and other mail receptacles remain an attractive target for criminals who have sought to exploit design vulnerabilities.

During the same period these physical security enhancements were implemented, the Postal Service began to experience a marked increase in letter carrier robberies. The rise in letter carrier robberies is evidenced by an 845% increase between FY 2019 and FY 2023, with 64 letter carrier robberies in FY 2019 and 605 letter carrier robberies in FY 2023.





1.0 ENHANCE DELL SECURITY

THE POSTAL INSPECTION SERVICE HAS DEVELOPED FIVE (5) STRATEGIC GOALS THAT FORM THE STRATEGY. THESE GOALS FOCUS OUR EFFORTS IN A MANNER THAT WILL ENSURE SUCCESS NOW AND IN THE FUTURE:



- 2. ADVANCE INTELLIGENCE-LED INVESTIGATIONS
- 3. DEPLOY COMMUNICATIONS AND INCREASE PREVENTION AWARENESS



This Strategy provides a broad outline of our priorities to set the direction and approach for our future. It does not attempt to detail every activity or initiative the Postal Inspection Service will pursue to achieve our strategic goals.

Enhancing delivery security is crucial to stopping mail thieves and preventing associated postal crimes, such as robberies of letter carriers. Three key components of this effort are deploying more secure mail receptacles, installing better locking mechanisms, and implementing increased security and accountability for arrow keys.

The Postal Inspection Service will work with the Postal Service to develop and deploy advanced technologies to secure and protect the Postal Service network and its employees. The Postal Inspection Service will also work with the Postal Service to identify and implement other security enhancements, including process improvements and collection box placement modifications.

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1.1 INCREASE THE SECURITY OF POSTAL SERVICE MAIL RECEPTACLES

As the starting and ending point for most mail that passes through the mailstream, mail receptacles are at the core of the Postal Service delivery network. Due to the location and vulnerabilities of some mail receptacles, such as Postal Service blue boxes, they may be susceptible to attack. To deter ever-evolving criminals, the Postal Service, in coordination with the Postal Inspection Service, will increase security measures for Postal Service mail receptacles. This will include designing, purchasing, and deploying new lock technologies, strengthening mail collection boxes by installing anti-fishing measures, and purchasing and deploying additional high-security collection boxes.

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ENHANCE DELIVERY SECURITY



1.2 ENHANCE THE SECURITY OF POSTAL SERVICE DELIVERY VEHICLES

The Postal Inspection Service collaborated with the Postal Service on the design of a new delivery vehicle that integrates enhanced security components, providing increased protection for letter carriers and preventing vehicle break-ins and mail theft. Until these new vehicles are built and fully deployed, the Postal Inspection Service will continue to collaborate with the Postal Service to enhance security for existing delivery vehicles, especially in high postal crime areas where delivery vehicles are frequently targeted for mail theft. Enhanced security for these delivery vehicles will harden the target to mitigate mail theft until the deployment of new delivery vehicles.

1.3 COORDINATE WITH THE POSTAL SERVICE ON ARROW KEY ACCOUNTABILITY

As a critical access control component for the Postal Service's delivery network, the arrow key requires a high level of accountability among the postal employees who have access to and handle them. The Postal Inspection Service will work with the Postal Service on process improvements and technological solutions to improve arrow key accountability among postal employees. The Postal Inspection Service will also share lost or stolen arrow key data with the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General. The Postal Inspection Service will refer employees who fail to maintain accountability for arrow keys to the U.S. Postal Service Office of the Inspector General for investigation, as well to Postal Service management for corrective action. Finally, the Postal Inspection Service will work with the Postal Service to implement electronic key accountability systems to secure arrow keys and increase Postal Service employee accountability for arrow keys.

2.0 Advance intelligence-led investigations

Intelligence is an indispensable tool for addressing mail theft and associated financial and violent crimes. The Postal Inspection Service will leverage internal and external data sources and the latest technologies to strategically focus investigations, gain investigative insights, and ultimately bring perpetrators of these crimes to justice. The Postal Inspection Service will accomplish this in collaboration with the Postal Service and external partners, including but not limited to local, state, and federal law enforcement partners, as well as private-sector partners.

2.1 LEVERAGE INTELLIGENCE TO GUIDE INVESTIGATIONS

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The Postal Inspection Service will expand its use of criminal intelligence from a variety of sources and expand partnerships to maximize the impact of its investigations. The Postal Inspection Service will further develop our connections within the financial industry to identify new trends, inform investigative techniques and data needs, develop criminal intelligence, and disrupt illicit money movement, including money mule activity.

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To accomplish this, the Postal Inspection Service will build upon its long-running relationships with its financial industry partners, such as the National Cyber Forensic Training Alliance, as well as its own Financial Industry Mail Security Initiative, where the Postal Inspection Service, law enforcement partners, and the financial industry come together to share the latest financial crime trends, criminal intelligence, and mitigation strategies.

The Postal Inspection Service will similarly collaborate with our federal, state, and local law enforcement partners, including the Department of Justice (DOJ), the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General, the U.S. Secret Service, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, among others, to identify new and emerging trends, share criminal intelligence, develop investigations, and identify collusive postal employees. These partnerships will act as a force multiplier in tackling mail theft and disrupting associated criminal activity.



ADVANCE INTELLIGENCE-LED INVESTIGATIONS

The Postal Inspection Service will also expand its partnerships to the technology sector and seek to increase the sharing of criminal intelligence and emerging trends with technology companies. These proposed partnerships would include collaboration with social media companies, online marketplaces and fintech companies, among others, to notify those technology companies on the misuse of their platforms, to inform business decisions made by those technology companies involving the disruption of illegal conduct on their platforms, and to reduce overall mail theft-related criminal activity.

2.2 COORDINATE WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE ON THE PROSECUTION OF CRIMINAL ENTERPRISES

The Department of Justice (DOJ), as the federal prosecutor, is an essential partner in the Postal Inspection Service's enforcement of federal law,



including federal statutes pertinent to mail theft and associated financial and violent crimes. The Postal Inspection Service will engage with DOJ at all levels and share emerging trends on criminal enterprises, criminal intelligence, and knowledge through training of DOJ personnel. The Postal Inspection Service will collaborate with DOJ to target and prioritize investigations of criminal organizations, especially those that commit gun violence and other violent acts against letter carriers, in alignment with DOJ's FY 2022-FY 2026 Strategic Plan. The Postal Inspection Service will also employ special assistant United States attorneys in a strategic manner to complement DOJ's prosecutorial resources, ensuring dedicated attention to postal crimes, including mail theft and violent crimes perpetrated against Postal Service employees.

2.3 DEPLOY AND UTILIZE PERSONNEL STRATEGICALLY TO ADVANCE AND SUPPORT INTELLIGENCE-LED INVESTIGATIONS

To meet the demands caused by the rise in mail theft and violent crime against Postal Service employees, the Postal Inspection Service will reorient the way it approaches both problems with our personnel resources. We will ensure resources are strategically assigned, including temporarily surging personnel to high postal crime areas, deploying specially trained violent crime specialists to critical incidents, employing financial crime task force officers, and placing personnel on task forces, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Violent Crimes Task Forces. These personnel allocations will expedite intelligence sharing, advance investigations, and leverage partnerships to bring additional resources to bear on these issues.

3.0 DEPLOY COMMUNICATIONS AND INCREASE PREVENTION AWARENESS

Communicating internally with postal employees and externally with the American public is essential to empowering postal employees to protect themselves and the American public to protect their mail and financial security.

Communicating internally with postal employees and externally with the American public about mail theft, and associated financial and violent crimes, is key to raising awareness about these issues and awareness about steps that both postal employees and the public can take to protect themselves. This also brings transparency to the actions that the Postal Inspection Service and Postal Service are taking in response to these issues, including security enhancements and investigative successes.

3.1 ENGAGE IN PREVENTION AWARENESS MESSAGING ON MAIL THEFT AND EMPLOYEE SAFETY IN PARTNERSHIP WITH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL PARTNERS

3.1.1 Increase Employee Safety and Mail Theft Prevention Awareness Among Postal Service Employees

The Postal Inspection Service will continue to leverage key relationships with the Postal Service to develop and distribute employee safety and mail theft prevention awareness material through Postal Service channels to Postal Service employees. The Postal Inspection Service will also collaborate with the Postal Service on partnerships with the Postal Service's unions, such as



DEPLOY COMMUNICATIONS AND INCREASE PREVENTION AWARENESS

the National Association of Letter Carriers, to garner support for prevention efforts that protect Postal Service employees from violent crimes.

3.1.2 Increase mail theft prevention and financial crime prevention awareness among Postal Service customers

The Postal Inspection Service will continue to develop and utilize all of its communication channels to distribute mail theft prevention and financial crime prevention awareness materials to Postal Service customers. The Postal Inspection Service will also leverage key relationships with the Postal Service to distribute mail theft and financial crime prevention material through Postal Service channels. The Postal Inspection Service will continue to foster external partnerships, such as with the American Bankers Association, the International Association of Financial Crimes Investigators, and the National Cyber Forensics Training Alliance, and develop new external partnerships to share mail theft and financial crime prevention material with the public.

3.2 ENGAGE IN REGULAR COMMUNICATION WITH KEY **STAKEHOLDERS TO RAISE AWARENESS OF POSTAL INSPECTION SERVICE AND POSTAL SERVICE EFFORTS TO PROTECT EMPLOYEES AND THE MAIL**

Awareness of key stakeholders on actions the Postal Inspection Service and Postal Service have taken and are taking to address mail theft and associated violent and financial crimes is vital to ensuring public trust and public confidence in both the Postal Service and Postal Inspection Service. It is also vital to securing the confidence of all Postal Service employees. The Postal Inspection Service will regularly engage in a transparent manner with key internal and external stakeholders,

such as Congress, the American Bankers Association, the Independent Community Bankers of America, the Bank Policy Institute, and the Financial Services Sector Coordinating Council, among others, to update them and their constituents on actions that are being undertaken to secure the Postal Service's delivery network, investigative successes, and prevention strategies. When appropriate, the Postal Inspection Service will also seek input from key stakeholders so that constructive feedback may inform our efforts.

3.3 IMPROVE VICTIM NOTIFICATION AND SUPPORT

Violent crimes against Postal Service employees, including letter carrier robberies and mail theft, have a significant impact on victims, albeit often in different ways. The Postal Inspection Service, as part of its investigative mission, provides notification and support to victims as required by statute and regulation. The Postal Inspection Service will identify ways it can improve its support to victims, especially Postal Service employees who are victims of letter carrier robberies. The Postal Inspection Service will also seek to improve notification and messaging to both known and potential victims of mail theft and related financial crimes.





UNITED STATES POSTAL INSPECTION SERVICE 4.0 **INVEST IN TOOLS, TECHNOLOGY AND** DATA ANALYTICS

The continuous development and application of data analytics to mail theft, and associated financial and violent crimes against Postal Service employees, is critical to identifying real-time emerging trends associated with these crimes, gathering investigative intelligence, and allocating and deploying investigative resources. To accomplish this, the Postal Inspection Service will identify relevant mail theft-related data sources, organize the data into an efficient environment where applied analytics may be performed, and leverage analytics personnel to apply data analytics techniques and perform continuous data analysis.

4.1 ENHANCE POSTAL SERVICE AND POSTAL **INSPECTION SERVICE DATA COLLECTION**

The Postal Inspection Service will work with the Postal Service to improve the collection of mail theft-related data, such as that associated with high-volume mail

theft complaints and customer mail theft complaints. Though the Postal Service and the Postal Inspection Service both currently collect useful mail theft-related data, we will enhance our data-collection processes while also facilitating easier reporting for the public.

4.2 LEVERAGE POSTAL SERVICE DATA AND **EXTERNAL DATA SOURCES**

The Postal Inspection Service will leverage Postal Service data, Postal Inspection Service data, and external data sources, such as from financial industry partners. This will allow the Postal Inspection Service to quickly identify emerging trends, develop investigative intelligence, monitor the success of security enhancements, and allocate resources.



INVEST IN TOOLS, TECHNOLOGY, AND DATA ANALYTICS



4.3 EXPAND DATA ANALYTICS CAPABILITIES

The Postal Inspection Service will take a range of measures to expand its analytics capabilities, including but not limited to identifying and procuring new or additional existing analytics tools and assigning specialized personnel to support analytics functions and continue to identify the needs of the Postal Inspection Service. Expanded data analytics capabilities are required to take full advantage of internal and external data, as well as to realize its full potential in aiding investigations and prevention efforts. Expanded data analytics capabilities will result in an increased capacity to perform trend analysis associated with mail theft and associated financial and violent crimes, increased investigative intelligence, increased investigative support, and greater insights.

INVEST IN TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGY 4.4

The rise in mail theft and violence against postal workers is exacerbated by trends in technology. Many recent technological advances make it easier for bad actors to share criminal tactics and strategies, sell stolen financial instruments, encrypt communications, transfer illicit funds, and evade or defeat security measures. This is evidenced by the proliferation of the stolen financial instruments and arrow keys available for sale on online market places, messaging platforms like Telegram, the use of peer-to-peer payment services, and crypto currencies to transfer fraudulently obtained funds. The Postal Inspection Service will procure and introduce new tools and technologies, including software, hardware, and services, which will enhance capabilities to confront these evolving challenges.

5.0 **DEPLOY ADVANCED TRAINING**

As technology, criminal techniques, and criminals themselves rapidly evolve, so must our training to ensure that personnel are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to successfully investigate mail theft

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Criminals operate on both Clearnet (publicly accessible and associated financial and violent crimes. Deploying networks/internet, including messaging platforms) and advanced training for postal inspectors and other Darknet networks (anonymous networks, including personnel is critical to ensure that the Postal Inspection peer-to-peer connections or through proxy networks). Service can meet this challenge head-on. Increased training of Postal Inspection Service Expanding the cadre of Postal Inspection Service personnel on such cyber-based networks is critical to personnel who have advanced training in mail theft our ability to conduct investigations of cyber-enabled investigations, financial crimes investigations, cyber activity associated with mail theft and related financial investigations, and violent crimes investigations is and violent crimes. The Postal Inspection Service will critical to ensuring Postal Inspection Service personnel develop and present specialized training, including are highly trained and competent to investigate, online undercover training, to its personnel so that they prevent, and otherwise address the challenges posed by can successfully conduct cyber-based investigations mail theft and associated financial and violent crimes. involving mail theft and associated crimes. This will also build a foundation to combat future crime trends.

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5.1 SPECIALIZED CYBER TRAINING FOR POSTAL **INSPECTORS AND OTHER PERSONNEL INVESTIGATING** MAIL THEFT RELATED TO SOCIAL MEDIA/INTERNET



DEPLOY ADVANCED TRAINING

5.2 ADVANCED TRAINING FOR POSTAL INSPECTORS AND OTHER PERSONNEL INVESTIGATING LETTER **CARRIER ROBBERIES AND VIOLENT ATTACKS ON POSTAL EMPLOYEES**

Robberies of letter carriers and violent attacks on postal employees are often quick and sometimes without any apparent evidence which would lead to the identification and prosecution of the perpetrator. However, there are advanced investigative techniques specific to robbery investigations which increase the chances of a successful case resolution. The Postal Inspection Service currently delivers and will continue to deliver training on advanced robbery investigation techniques to its personnel. This training enables inspectors and analysts to employ these higher-level investigative

techniques to the most complex robbery cases, resulting in the likelihood of better investigative outcomes.

5.3 ADVANCED FINANCIAL CRIMES TRAINING

Mail theft and associated financial and violent crimes have been driven primarily by criminals with a financial motive. These criminals engage in complex schemes to facilitate the theft and laundering of victim funds, requiring Postal Inspection Service personnel to understand the many intricate aspects of financial crimes and corresponding investigative techniques. The Postal Inspection Service will deliver advanced financial crimes training to its postal inspectors and other personnel, which will empower them to develop evidence that will result in successful prosecution.

EMPLOYEE SAFETY IS VITAL

The safety and security of our employees, facilities, vehicles, and the U.S. Mail[®] is of the utmost importance to the Postal Service[™] and the Postal Inspection Service[™]. Here are some tips to help all employees stay safe:

0	1	Be aware of your surroundings. Looking alert can deter an attacker.		4	Report incidents of individuals with undue curiosity in Postal Service operations or assets to your supervisor. Note any details about the person and their vehicle.
6	2	Maintain physical security. Ensure that doors to facilities and vehicles are always locked.		5	Leave the area if you see suspicious activity and call 9-1-1 when it's safe. Then, call your supervisor, who will call postal inspectors.
Remen		Keep all postal keys and arrow keys chained to your person and out of sight. Don't flaunt valuables. T: You are our most important delivery!	₩	6	If you are robbed or attacked on your route, comply with the assailant's demands. Nothing is more valuable than your life. When it is safe to do so, write down any details you can remember and provide them to your supervisor and postal inspectors.



UNITED STATES POSTAL INSPECTION SERVICE

CONCLUSION

The Postal Inspection Service is committed to protecting all postal employees, securing the mail, and defending the Postal Service's infrastructure from criminal attack. These duties are central to the Postal Inspection Service's mission, and we are firmly resolved to meeting this responsibility. As the Postal Service, its employees, and its infrastructure face increased criminal attack, the Postal Inspection Service reaffirms its commitment to its mission. The Postal Inspection Service and the Postal Service are making significant investments of time, capital, personnel, and resources to protect all postal employees and the mail. We will continue to make these crucial investments into the future, working with all of our partners to ensure that the public's trust in the mail endures and that postal employees are able to safely perform their essential service to the American public.



UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

HEADQUARTERS

