Reward offered in pepper spray bank robberies

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Banking interests in Oregon and Washington are offering a reward of up to $12,500 for information leading to the identification, arrest and conviction of a violent serial bank robber operating in the region. This person is responsible for as many as six bank robberies between October 2006 and February 2007 in Northwest Oregon and Southwest Washington.

The Financial Institutions Security Task Force (FIST), sponsored by the Oregon Bankers Association and the Credit Union Association of Oregon, is contributing up to $5,000 towards the reward fund. FIST is a cooperative effort made up of representatives from banks, credit unions and law enforcement agencies, with the sole purpose of reducing crimes committed against financial institutions.

The Washington Bankers Association Rat on a Rat (ROAR) program is contributing up to $2,500 towards the reward fund. ROAR is a program designed to alert the state's banks and bank employees to particular threats from serial robbers and those committing frauds.

An individual bank is contributing up to another $5,000. In the event of an arrest and conviction, it will be up to each organization to determine who is eligible to receive its reward funds.

The suspect, nicknamed the "Pepper Spray Robber", uses physical force in his unusual "takeover" style bank robberies. He is known to grab someone in the bank while announcing to others what his intentions are. On more than one occasion, the suspect has been seen carrying a small device, possibly pepper spray. He actually sprayed one bank employee in one of the robberies. In all cases, he has locked or secured employees and customers in a back room before leaving.

The first robbery took place on October 24, 2006, at the Bank of America branch located in Rainier, Oregon. On December 11, 2006, the suspect struck again, robbing the First Independent Bank in Woodland, Washington. The third robbery occurred December 20, 2006, at The Bank of the Pacific branch located in Gearhart, Oregon. One week later, on December 27, 2006, the robber hit the Hazel Dell branch of Key Bank in Vancouver, Washington. The very next day, the robber struck for a fifth time at the Great Northwest

Federal Credit Union located in Long Beach, Washington. The sixth and most recent robbery occurred February 16, 2007, at the Bank of America in Woodland, Washington.

The suspect is described as a white male, 30-40 years of age, six-foot two-inches to six-foot four-inches tall, weighing 250 pounds or more, with possibly hazel eyes. His build is medium, strong, and athletic. He has worn a variety of outfits, including large green rain jacket with an emblem on the left arm (Gearhart), a black hooded rain jacket with a light vertical stripe (Rainier), a tan/yellow jacket (Hazel Dell), a dark blue windbreaker with hood (Woodland) a variety of gloves (white surgical, clear, black and half finger winter gloves), a black mask (Long Beach, Woodland, Gearhart and Hazel Dell).

Anyone with information about these cases should contact the Portland FBI at (503) 224 4181 or the Vancouver FBI at (360) 695 5661.

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