

**GEORGIA BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
REGION 10
INVESTIGATIVE CASE SUMMARY**

10-0251-23-09

On Wednesday, April 29, 2009, at approximately 11:16 a.m., SPECIAL AGENT B. J. HAYNES and ASSISTANT SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE (ASAC) JESSE MADDOX were located at the Department of Human Resources (DHR) Office at 2600 Skyland Drive, Atlanta, Georgia for the purpose of interviewing ROMEO STOCKETT. STOCKETT is the Deputy Director for Vital Records for the Department of Human Resources. STOCKETT was being interviewed in reference to information he may have involving this investigation. STOCKETT provided essentially the following information at this time:

STOCKETT advised that RICHARD WHEAT was the Director for the Vital Records Department and he was the Deputy Director. RICHARD WHEAT began his employment in June 2007 and STOCKETT began in November 2007. They mainly dealt with legal issues with adoptions and things like that. They would deal with other agencies that would come to their office looking for official documentation of relationships and issues of that nature. They mainly dealt with birth certificates, death certificates and name changes.

STOCKETT advised that they had a big problem with things stopping at RICHARD WHEAT'S desk. They would just pile up. There were several cases that would be behind and not answered because they would sit on WHEAT'S desk for such a long period of time. STOCKETT advised he had written WHEAT at least two to three memos about this issue of things piling up on his desk.

In December 2008, STOCKETT remembered WHEAT being on Christmas break. STOCKETT advised WHEAT that he was going to clean up his (WHEAT'S) office. When STOCKETT went in he found 20 cases that needed to be processed and had the staff perform the tasks at hand. The staff was not happy about this at the time, but STOCKETT knew that these cases needed to be processed because they had just been sitting on WHEAT'S desk. After the first of the year in January 2009, STOCKETT had a serious talk with WHEAT about things piling up on his desk and

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WHEAT advised that he would make sure that did not happen again.

STOCKETT described how the most recent situation came to light was when WHEAT was gone on vacation over Spring Break and his secretary, TRACY WHITUS, noted that the housekeeping for the building found three (3) boxes of unanswered birth certificate name changes in his closet. These boxes were brought into STOCKETT'S office. STOCKETT then brought RICHARD WHEAT into his office and said that this was not acceptable and they could not do this. After this, TRACY WHITUS found three (3) more boxes of unanswered "business" in an outside closet. TRACY WHITUS also told STOCKETT that there had been some files found in WHEAT'S car. STOCKETT advised this was a huge policy violation and that even as the registrar he could not keep these items in his car.

STOCKETT advised that a week before going on his spring vacation, WHEAT advised that he would fix the problem of the backlog. When WHEAT left for vacation, he had not even scratched the surface of answering the "business" at hand. STOCKETT then organized a group of office support to handle this backlog. TRACY WHITUS urged him to report this to the officials downtown with the Department of Human Resources because the staff knew about the problems at hand and they need to be addressed with RICHARD WHEAT.

STOCKETT advised that he then called DR. SANDRA FORD, Director of Public Health for the Department of Human Resources. He advised DR. FORD of the problem on a Friday, because he knew that RICHARD WHEAT would be back to work the following Monday. At this time, DR. FORD sent two of her staff members to this office to review the problem. When they came out to the office, they said not to do anything more until DR. FORD had been made aware of the situation. This was dealing with the boxes of information that had not been answered. STOCKETT advised that after this, INVESTIGATOR KEN BRAMLETT came to the office and retrieved the documents. The following Monday, when RICHARD WHEAT came to

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work, he was interview and then escorted to his car and had been on paid suspension since that time.

STOCKETT then described the files that were of the individuals under the Witness Protection Program. He advised there were approximately 15 of these files of people who fell under this program. They are the residual from the last cases, where the state made changes to the identification. This is because the State of Georgia opted out of the Witness Protection Program and now it is handled by the U.S. Marshall Service. The files came from the old deputy director's office approximately two years ago. RICHARD WHEAT said he would find out what to do with the files and handle them appropriately, but never did. These files are now in the custody of the U.S. Marshall Service.

STOCKETT was then asked to describe the "five year rule". STOCKETT advised that there is no Policy on the "five year rule". STOCKETT advised that when RICHARD WHEAT was suspended, DR. FORD spoke with the entire office about the situation. After this meeting, an employee by the name of AQUILLA GIST came to STOCKETT and asked him about the "five year rule" or if they were still supposed to follow it. STOCKETT advised he did not know what she was talking about and told her to operate under the Policy and Code that they were supposed to and not anything other than that. MS. GIST then gave an example of a case where a Hispanic was using their Hispanic surname and there was a mistake with it. RICHARD WHEAT went ahead and made the change to the surname without requesting a court order to do this. He did this under what MS. GIST called the "five year rule". This was where a birth certificate may be amended if the documentation from an employer or a doctor's office supported the name change. With this Hispanic surname change, it was only because there was a mistake in the spelling. STOCKETT did state that MS. GIST told him that you could also change your name under this "five year rule" as well. An example was if the name on your birth certificate was Robert; however, you went by Bobby and had gone by Bobby for quite some time, you could legally have your name

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changed from Robert to Bobby. STOCKETT did not know how many issues there would be with this rule. STOCKETT advised that RICHARD WHEAT made several independent decisions that were not consistent with the policy of DHR or the law.

STOCKETT felt that WHEAT was way in over his head. This was because WHEAT had made statements to him about this before. WHEAT never thought that he would even get this job in the first place. WHEAT made comments to STOCKETT that he had never made this much money in his life. At the time that WHEAT came to employment with the State of Georgia he was bankrupt and in foreclosure. Around Christmas time, WHEAT had told STOCKETT that he had finally made it through all of his financial trouble and was just able to get back onto his feet. Within the last month, WHEAT had advised STOCKETT that he was going to start looking at buying a townhouse and getting out of the apartment complex he was living in. STOCKETT advised that WHEAT was very paranoid about his job and was always afraid he was going to lose it.

WHEAT had never given TRACY WHITUS a document to file in the two years that he had been at the office, according to STOCKETT.

STOCKETT advised AGENT HAYNES and ASAC MADDOX that all of the documents that were found in WHEAT'S office had been placed onto a spreadsheet so that they would be able to see which files were there and if the tasks had been completed. STOCKETT provided AGENT HAYNES with a copy of this spreadsheet. STOCKETT advised that they even found old checks in the paperwork that were so old they could not be cashed. STOCKETT advised that rarely did cash payments come into the office and if they did, they were dealt with before they got this far. STOCKETT advised that all documents that came through the office should have been recorded and filed accordingly. They should constantly be moving; however, they all stopped at RICHARD WHEAT'S office and did not move from there. Currently all mail is now being opened and placed into a tracking system, so that it will be easier to locate and

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they will be able to know where information is. Before this, all of the mail would be sent directly to RICHARD WHEAT'S office sealed and unopened.

STOCKETT advised he did not believe that RICHARD WHEAT was taking any money for any services outside of the agency. He did not feel that RICHARD WHEAT was selling birth certificates or anything to that extent. STOCKETT advised that RICHARD WHEAT was really a nice guy and STOCKETT does not think that WHEAT was doing anything illegal.

STOCKETT advised that they were currently doing a clean sweep of the building to see if any more documents could be found.

STOCKETT could provide no further information at this time and the interview was concluded.

ATTACHMENT:

1. Copy of DHR, Department of Vital Records Spreadsheet.

ID DATA:

STOCKETT, ROMEO
SEX/RACE: MALE/BLACK
COUNTRY: UNITED STATES
EMPLOYER:
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES
2600 SKYLAND DRIVE
ATLANTA GA 30319
BUSINESS: (678)360-6501

SPECIAL AGENT BENJAMIN J HAYNES: 5/5/2009
jlm: 5/19/2009

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**GEORGIA BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
REGION 10
INVESTIGATIVE CASE SUMMARY**

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On Wednesday, May 6, 2009, at approximately 1:55 p.m., SPECIAL AGENT B. J. HAYNES and ASSISTANT SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE (ASAC) JESSE MADDOX were located at the GBI Atlanta Regional Office in Conyers, Georgia for the purpose of interviewing RICHARD WHEAT. WHEAT is the former Director of Vital Records for the Department of Human Resources and the subject of this investigation. AGENT HAYNES and ASAC MADDOX interviewed WHEAT in reference to this investigation. Also present during this interview was INVESTIGATOR KEN BRAMLETT with the Department of Human Resources. WHEAT provided essentially the following information at this time:

He had been employed with the Department of Human Resources as the Director of Vital Records from June 2006 until April 30, 2009. He operated under the Official Code of Georgia, Section 31-10. He dealt mainly with new vital events to include births, deaths, marriages, and divorces. He was particularly responsible for the issuance of these vital records. There were approximately 210,000 requests that came through his office every year.

WHEAT advised that he did not get rid of items very easily. He advised that he was trying to clean up piles of paper on his desk and he was sure that there were some original birth records that were left on his desk.

WHEAT advised that the mail would go through the Fee Room at his office and they would take the checks out and then send the information to his desk. However, he noted that some checks did make it to his desk. All checks or money orders were made out to Vital Records and not to anyone specifically. WHEAT advised that to make any change to a vital record you would need a sealed court order.

RICHARD WHEAT was asked about the "five year rule" which came up during a previous interview during this investigation. WHEAT advised that under the Department of Human Resources Policy and Statute that a person would need a

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document of at least five years of age to change a name. If the customer was able to give documentation that old that they had gone by one name, then they would be able to move forward, if not, the customer would have to give them additional information. This document would have to be something that would be able to be verified, for example, information from Social Security, a Voter Registration Card, or a Marriage License. WHEAT'S understanding was that employment and medical records could also be used for verification. WHEAT did advise that even with this documentation of five years under one name, there would still need to be a sealed court order to change the name, even with this documentation. However, WHEAT could not say for sure that there were documents not issued without a court order under the "five year rule".

WHEAT adamantly stated that he never made changes to any records for money. He has never been approached to do this either. WHEAT stated that he never did anything with criminal intent.

WHEAT advised that he was formerly a Vital Records Manager for the State of Michigan. WHEAT was then interviewed in reference to the files of individuals under the Witness Protection Program. He advised that he would contact the U.S. Marshall's Office occasionally about these files, but not regularly. WHEAT did not know how many files there were, or how many individuals there were under the Witness Protection Program. All of these files were kept in a brown envelope. These files were kept in either his office or ROMEO STOCKETT'S office in the brown envelope in a drawer. He did this thinking that his office was a secure location and that he did not need to lock them up anywhere else. WHEAT advised that there was no secure access location that the files could have been kept in.

WHEAT advised that he never altered any records or numbers that are given to the Social Security Service.

WHEAT advised that he was very sorry that things worked out the way that they did.

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For a more complete account of this interview, please see the attached CD recording in this case file.

ATTACHMENT:

1. CD Recording of interview with RICHARD WHEAT.

ID DATA:

WHEAT, RICHARD (Previously Submitted)

SPECIAL AGENT BENJAMIN J HAYNES: 5/15/2009

jlm: 5/19/2009

