

21 May 2020

The Times-Tribune, Scranton, Pa. | By Frank Wilkes Lesnefsky

Man to Spend Up to 12 years in Prison for Stolen Valor, Theft Charges



A West Scranton, Pennsylvania, man who lied about his military service as he stole nearly \$17,000 from an American Legion post will spend up to 12 years in prison.

Lackawanna County Judge Vito Geroulo sentenced Christopher Crawford on Wednesday to six to 12 years in prison, followed by four years of probation, said First Assistant District Attorney Judy Price, who prosecuted the case. Crawford, 32, must also pay back \$16,701.15 that he stole from American Legion Post 568 in Minooka, she said.

In February at a nonjury trial, Geroulo found Crawford guilty of two counts each of theft and receiving stolen property, five counts of access device fraud for using the legion's debit card to make dozens of unauthorized purchases and cash withdrawals last year, and two counts of misrepresenting himself as a veteran.

Price noted that Crawford received consecutive six-month sentences for misrepresenting both his service record and valor, which is on the high end of the standard sentencing range. Crawford claimed he was a combat veteran who was wounded in Iraq. His military record showed otherwise. Crawford was discharged under other-than-honorable conditions after he went AWOL during boot camp in 2007.

Crawford was initially arrested in August and charged with 136 felony counts for stealing more than \$10,000 from the American Legion Post while serving as its executive officer in charge of memberships and recruitment. The post later discovered he had stolen thousands more, leading to a new batch of theft charges.

From March 2019 through August, Crawford used the post's debit cards at bars, restaurants, a CVS pharmacy in Lackawanna County, and on trips to casinos in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and Venice, Florida, authorities said.

When he found Crawford guilty several months ago, Geroulo said evidence overwhelmingly showed he abused post members' trust by fooling them into believing he was a disabled war veteran.

Lackawanna County District Attorney Mark Powell said his office is pleased with the sentence Geroulo imposed.

"He got everything he deserved," Powell said. "The offense was particularly egregious because he targeted veterans, stole their money and stole their valor."

Crawford remains at Lackawanna County Prison.

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