

# The Charlotte Observer

## Point man in heist pleads guilty

### Ghantt apologizes to kin for vanishing

By **JEFF DIAMANT**  
Staff Writer

In October, he stole \$17 million and left the country, not contacting relatives until he was arrested in Mexico six months later.

On Friday, David Scott Ghantt publicly apologized to his family.

"I regret that I got entangled in circumstances that led to pain to my wife and to my family," Ghantt said in court after he pleaded guilty to bank larceny

and two counts of money-laundering in October's \$17 million heist from Loomis Fargo, an armored-car service company Ghantt worked for at the time.

In a short haircut and royal blue jail uniform from the York County Detention Center, Ghantt nodded to U.S. Magistrate Judge Brent



Ghantt

**LOOMIS** from 1C

McKnight as he answered basic questions such as whether he was satisfied with his lawyer. ("Extremely," he said.)

Ghantt patted his mother on the shoulder and told her he loved her as he left the courtroom. His father, wife Tammy and sister-in-law also attended the hearing.

Ghantt, who was authorities' first suspect in the case after he was caught on security video taking the money out of a vault, became the 17th of 20 defendants to either plead guilty or sign written agreements to do so.

"This guilty plea is sort of the last of the major players in the case," said Assistant U.S. Attorney David Keesler. "... We're preparing for trial on the remaining cases."

The remaining cases, which involve money-laundering

charges, include Michael and Kim Goodman, who knew other defendants, and Gastonia lawyer Jeffrey Guller.

At the hearing, Keesler read the charges against Ghantt:

■ That on Oct. 4, the Loomis Fargo employee loaded \$17 million belonging to First Union and NationsBank into a van, transferred the money to other defendant, and received some of the stolen money while he was in Mexico.

Three defendants — Steven Eugene Chambers, Kelly Jane Campbell and Michael McKinney — have pleaded guilty to trying to kill Ghantt while he was in Mexico. Chambers, Campbell and Ghantt planned the theft and had agreed to split the loot three ways, according to indictments.

The maximum sentence for money-laundering is 20 years in prison and a fine. For bank larceny, it's 10 years in prison and a

fine. Federal sentencing guidelines usually instruct judges to give much less than the maximum, depending on factors such as criminal records and whether a defendant cooperated with authorities.

Ghantt had no criminal record. His lawyer, Noell Tin, indicated that Ghantt will tell his side of the story at his sentencing hearing, which could be months away.

"The fact that it won't be presented to a jury doesn't mean it won't be presented to a judge," he said.

Outside the courtroom, Ghantt's mother, Sue Ghantt, said "The story's not been told yet."

About \$2.5 million of the stolen money remains missing.

"We'd love to recover all the money," Keesler said. "As time passes, that gets harder."

Reach Jeff Diamant at (704) 868-7733 or [jdiamant@charlotte.com](mailto:jdiamant@charlotte.com).