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## **Bank Robber Sentenced to Eight Years in Prison for Various Robberies, Including One in Darien**

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Back in April of 2014, George Bratensis, then about 65 years old, dropped off Bomani Africa in Darien. Africa entered the People's United Bank branch on Old Kings Highway North, "pulled out a gun, jumped over the teller counter and ordered a teller to open drawers, saying 'I will shoot you if you don't give me all your money!'"

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That's how the U.S. Attorney's Office for Connecticut described the robbery in a news release announcing that a judge sentenced Bratsenis on Tuesday to eight years in prison for that robbery and a string of others. Bratsenis is now 75. Eight years from now, he'll be 81.

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Perhaps Africa's threat to shoot the bank teller was serious: In addition to pleading guilty to one count of robbery in Connecticut, Bratsenis and Africa have each pleaded guilty to committing a contract killing of a person in New Jersey.

That murder took place a month after the Darien robbery. The two each await sentencing in that case.

The U.S. Attorney's Office announcement provided the following information, which the announcement said was from court documents and testimony:

Bratsenis' life of crime goes back at least a little while before April 1984 (when he was 35). That's when he was convicted in federal court for armed bank robbery. He was sentenced to 25 years in prison in that case.

Bratsenis and Africa met when the two were serving time on robbery convictions in a New Jersey state prison.

By the time the Darien bank was robbed, the two were working together.

## **Timeline**

**April 20, 2014** — Bratsenis and Africa robbed the bank branch on Old Kings Highway North. Bratsenis drove his pickup truck and dropped Africa off downtown. Africa took "a substantial amount of cash" when he left the bank. Bratsenis picked him up not far from the bank, and they drove off.

**September 2014** — Bratsenis, Africa and Africa's son, Randi Feliciano, conspired to rob another bank.

**Sept. 25, 2014** — In the early morning hours, Feliciano drove Africa from Philadelphia to a parking lot in Trumbull. At about 8:30 a.m., Africa stole a car from a victim a gunpoint.

**Sept. 26, 2014 (the next morning)** — Africa and Bratsenis, both wearing masks and brandishing firearms, robbed a People's United Bank branch on Madison Avenue in Trumbull. They took almost \$30,000 in cash. After they got away in the car Africa had carjacked, they set fire to it in a nearby parking lot. Feliciano drove Africa from the scene and followed Bratsenis to a Norwalk restaurant, where the three men divided the robbery loot. Feliciano then drove Africa back to Philadelphia.

**Sept. 28, 2014** — Bratsenis was arrested in Trumbull. He's been in jail ever since.

**Dec. 13, 2014** — Africa and Feliciano, both wearing masks and brandishing firearms, robbed a First Niagara Bank branch on Hawley Lane in Stratford. They took more than \$15,000 in cash.

**May 28, 2015** — Africa was arrested.

**Dec. 16, 2015** — Africa pleaded guilty to one count of armed bank robbery. He hasn't yet been sentenced.

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**Feb. 21, 2017** — Feliciano was sentenced to four years and three months in prison after previously pleading guilty to one count of armed bank robbery.

**Oct. 18, 2019** — Bretensis pleaded guilty to one count of armed bank robbery.

In addition to the prison sentence, Bretensis was sentenced to three years of supervised release. Before his arrest in the robbery cases, he lived in Bridgeport.

Along with the FBI, Darien police and police in Trumbull, Stratford and Bridgeport all worked on the bank robbery cases.