

HCC Coach Arraigned

(KNZA)--The Highland Community College head women's basketball coach was arraigned Tuesday in federal court in a multi-state car theft conspiracy.

48-year-old B.J. Smith is charged with one count of conspiracy and three counts each of mail fraud and receipt of a stolen motor vehicle. Not guilty pleas were entered on his behalf during his arraignment in St. Louis.

Smith is among 21 people who were charged last week in a conspiracy that prosecutors allege involved more than 100 vehicles.

According to the U.S. Attorney's office, the defendants are charged with stealing or fraudulently obtaining vehicles from individuals and automobile dealerships in Missouri, Iowa, Illinois and Indiana. They are accused of using different schemes to obtain insurance proceeds by staging accidents and filing false theft reports.

Smith is alleged to have obtained fraudulent transfer titles in 2011 and 2012 from the Osage Nation for a dozen vehicles, including two Mercedes. The titles allowed the vehicles to be resold.

Smith is currently free on bond.

(AP contributed to this story)

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