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Nurse charged in USPS fraud

Daly City woman accused of pocketing \$64,000 in scam involving fake medical invoices

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Neither rain, snow nor gloom of night could keep a U.S. Postal Service contract nurse from cheating the federal agency out of about \$64,000 with fake medical invoices, prosecutors said Wednesday.

Janet Ortega, 44, of Daly City has been indicted by a federal grand jury on seven counts of felony mail fraud.

According to the indictment, Ortega — while working from April 2003 to February 2004 in the medical unit at the postal processing and distribution center on Evans Avenue in San Francisco — created, submitted and authorized about 37 bogus invoices for services supposedly performed by a physician named Dr. John De Leon.

But De Leon apparently doesn't exist; Ortega had the checks sent to a post office box that she controlled, and she pocketed the money herself, prosecutors say.

Each fraud count is punishable by up to 20 years in federal prison and a fine of up to \$250,000 plus restitution. She's scheduled to appear Dec. 14 before U.S. Magistrate Judge Bernard Zimmerman of San Francisco. Court records don't indicate that she's retained an attorney yet, and she couldn't be reached for comment Wednesday.

California Board of Registered Nursing records show Ortega was issued a license in November 1997 and has no record of disciplinary actions.