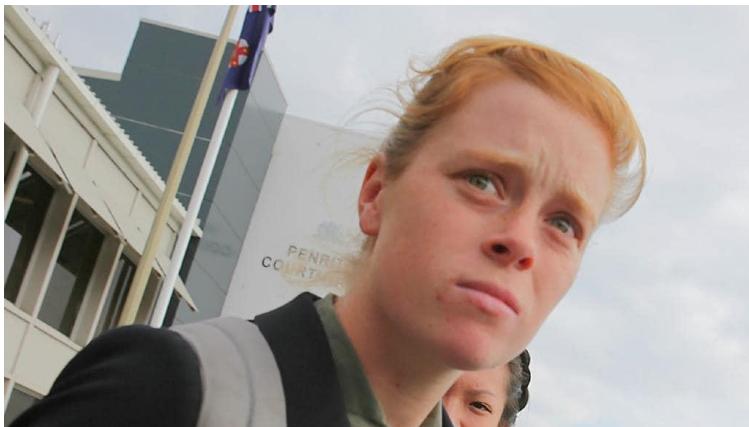


# Defence Force member accused of bank holdup with toy pistol appears in court



Sarah Crawford, The Daily Telegraph

May 12, 2017 2:47pm

AN Australian Defence Force member accused of holding up a bank on a base with a toy pistol is expected to fight the charge at trial.

Sarah Royna, 25, is charged with armed robbery, two counts of conspiracy to commit armed robbery and using an unauthorised pistol.

She fronted Penrith Local Court this morning while across the corridor — in the district court — her co-accused Tayla Stahl-Smith, 22, (pictured) was due to be sentenced after pleading guilty to her involvement in the audacious plot to “get rich” by robbing the bank.

It is alleged Royna walked into the Australian Defence Credit Union on the Royal Australian Air Force Base at Richmond, in Western Sydney, wearing a black balaclava and holding a toy pistol and demanded cash.

The lone teller allegedly handed her \$2685, which she stuffed into a backpack and fled, jumping into a getaway car driven by Stahl-Smith, who drove just 500m to their on-base residence.

DPP solicitor Marcelo Valerie asked for a short adjournment saying the matter “is likely to be committed to trial on the next occasion”.

The court heard the parties were in negotiations on some of the charges and asked for the case to be adjourned for four weeks.



A serving member of the Australian Defence Force is arrested over the armed robbery in 2014.



Tayla Stahl-Smith (centre) has pleaded guilty and is due to be sentenced on September 4.  
Picture: Facebook

Meanwhile the sentence for Stahl-Smith in the adjacent courtroom was also adjourned.

The agreed facts in Stahl-Smith's case claim the plot to rob the bank began in January 2014 during a long drive from Victoria to Sydney when the pair discussed "robbing a bank and getting rich".

In a police interview Stahl-Smith told police that after the conversation she received a text from Royna saying "you still keen on that bank job?"



Tayla Stahl-Smith arriving at Penrith court. Picture: John Grainger



Police investigating the scene of the holdup.

The pair then allegedly plotted to rob someone at an ATM or a bank, finally settling on the Australian Defence Credit Union on the base.

The day before the robbery Stahl-Smith texted Royna "man I'm so keen aye".

Royna replied, “Same scared but excited at the same time LOL”.

Stahl-Smith wrote, “you will s\*\*t yourself”.

Royna allegedly responded, “yeah but I want 100s of thousands”.

The court documents in Stahl-Smith’s case say the pair plotted to rob the Windsor RSL on February 25 but the 22-year-old told police she became scared and pulled out.

The credit union holdup was originally investigated by the ADF but the Director of Military Prosecutions withdrew the charges in November 2015.

NSW Police Robbery and Serious Crime Squad then took over the case and the pair were arrested in April 2016 and have remained on bail.

Royna will next appear in court on June 9 while Stahl-Smith will be sentenced on September 4.

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# Army private avoids jail for role in Air Force base bank robbery

A YOUNG army private who helped rob a credit union on a Sydney Air Force base has been spared jail after a car accident left her with brain injuries.

[The Daily Telegraph](#) September 6, 2017 2:49pm



Tayla Stahl has avoided jail over her role in an “amateurish” robbery. Picture: John Grainger  
*Source: News Corp Australia*

A YOUNG army private who helped rob a credit union on a Sydney Air Force base has been spared jail after a car accident left her with brain injuries.

Tayla Stahl, 22, was handed a two-year suspended jail sentence in Penrith District Court today after pleading guilty to help rob a credit union at Richmond RAAF base in February, 2014, and conspiring to rob an RSL.

The judge described the heist on the Defence Force Credit Union as “an amateurish and indeed stupid plan” and said it was absurd to think anyone from the general public could be co-accused.

The since-fired private acted as lookout and then drove the getaway car 500 metres across the secured Defence facility.



Stahl has been fired since the robbery.*Source:Facebook*



Stahl suffered a brain injury in 2015. Picture: John Grainger*Source:News Corp Australia*

“It was as brazen in its (execution) as it was inanely amateurish in its planning,” Judge Robert Sutherland said.

“This was, in military terms, a safe base.”

The 22-year-old’s co-accused has pleaded not guilty and is going to trial.

Judge Sutherland took into account several factors in Stahl’s sentence, including her age at the time of the offence and her early admission of guilt.

He also noted the Victoria-raised woman was neither the instigator, perpetrator nor beneficiary of the armed robbery and was “in the thrall” of her co-accused.

Nevertheless, accomplices to armed robbery were convicted of the same crime as their partners holding the weapon.

A significant factor in suspending her sentence were injuries sustained when Stahl was hit by a car on a night out in Sydney in June 2015.

Traumatic brain and wider physical injuries have affected Stahl's memory and mental health, and required her to undergo substantial rehabilitation.

Judge Sutherland said he believed the sum of those factors "crossed the threshold" for considering a suspended sentence.

The lengthy delay between the offence and prosecution was blamed on the defence force's two-and-a-half-year internal investigation that ended in the matter being turned over to NSW police.

—AAP

Originally published as [Private avoids jail over 'amateurish' bank robbery](#)

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# Former Army private Sarah Royna found guilty of plot to rob RSL

By [Brooke Wylie](#)

Updated 24 May 2018, 12:58pm



Media player: "Space" to play, "M" to mute, "left" and "right" to seek.

[Video: Sarah Royna collided with a camera operator outside court. \(ABC News\)](#)

Sarah Royna's dramatic sprint into Penrith District court was her last dash before her sentence is handed down, after a judge found her guilty of a second robbery plot.

Disguised in a beanie and brown wig, the former Army private crashed into a cameraman on her way into court for the verdict on allegations she plotted to rob an RSL just a week after robbing a military bank.

The 26-year-old pleaded guilty to armed robbery after she held up the Australian Defence Credit Union on Richmond's military base with a replica pistol and balaclava at 3:30pm on February 7, 2014.

After robbing the credit union, Royna and her co-accused Tayla Stahl-Smith made off with \$2,685 in a getaway vehicle while the base went into lockdown.

In a judge-only trial, Judge Stephen Hanley found Royna guilty of a second charge of conspiring to rob Windsor RSL with her co-accused, a charge Royna had denied.

Judge Hanley referenced text messages between the pair as evidence of the plot, and the fact they had purchased two knives and clothing to carry out a second robbery shortly after completing the first.

"I am satisfied beyond reasonable doubt there was an agreement to rob Windsor RSL with a dangerous weapon," Judge Hanley said.

"The plan to carry out the Windsor RSL [robbery] falls within commission of offence even though it was not carried out."

The text exchange presented at trial between the two women showed Royna telling her co-accused she had an idea.

"It's my best yet," Royna texted.

"It's almost as easy as the last one."

Judge Hanley told the court he believed that was "clearly" a reference to the credit union robbery and that a custodial sentence was "inevitable".

Stahl-Smith is currently serving a suspended sentence for her role in the first robbery.

Richmond RAAF base is one of Australia's largest military bases and home to the country's C-130 Hercules fleet, as well as a major logistics hub for the Australian Defence Force.

Royna was refused bail and will be sentenced on October 2.

**Topics:** [courts-and-trials](#), [law-crime-and-justice](#), [sydney-2000](#)

First posted 24 May 2018, 12:40pm

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-05-24/sarah-royna-found-guilty-of-robbing-rsl-and-military-bank/9795636>

