



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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PROMOTER OF HIGH-YIELD INVESTMENT SCHEME SENTENCED TO FEDERAL PRISON

PHOENIX – Dennis D. Cope, 56, of Mesa, Ariz., was sentenced today to 84 months in federal prison by U.S. District Judge James A. Teilborg. Cope pleaded guilty in December 2007 to one count each of conspiracy and securities fraud. Cope was also ordered to pay restitution to numerous victims for a total of \$3,949,947.

Beginning in June 1998 through July 2003, Cope and co-conspirator Edgar Mills Bias operated several businesses created for the purpose of soliciting individuals to invest in high-yield producing “trading programs.” The bogus programs involved the use of investor funds as collateral for the purchase and sale of purported medium-term bank notes offered by financial institutions located outside the United States. Investors were promised yields as high as 120%.

Other investment opportunities offered by Cope and Bias included purported restaurant acquisitions and multi-national oil pipeline development projects. Business names used by the pair to perpetuate the scheme included Millennium Group International, Inc. of Mesa; Green Gables Management of Mesa; Servicios Duwas, a Costa Rican entity; Partner Bank purportedly based in Montenegro; and FIIK Investments & Holdings, Inc., a Houston, Texas entity.

Victims invested over \$18.5 million, of which \$8.6 million was paid to investors as seeming returns on their investments. This led investors to believe their investment was safe and earning the stated rate of return. The apparent success of the original investors convinced subsequent individuals to make their own investments, thus affecting a Ponzi scheme. Edgar Mills Bias, 50, of Phoenix, was sentenced to 96 months in prison in December 2008. Bias pleaded guilty on December 4, 2007, to one count each of mail fraud, wire fraud, and conspiracy. Judge Teilborg ordered Bias pay victim restitution in the amount of \$8,484,733.

“This sentencing brings to a close a very long and complex matter, which involved several overlapping Ponzi schemes that were committed in several states over a long period of time,” stated U.S. Attorney Diane J. Humetewa. “After today, it is extremely unlikely that this defendant will ever be able to defraud another person ever again.”

“Mr. Cope and others perpetrated an elaborate scam that fleeced over 200 consumers out of millions of dollars,” stated Pete Zegarac, Inspector in Charge of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service’s Phoenix Division. “As our nation faces tough economic times, it is more important than ever to send a clear message to criminals that law enforcement will not idly stand by while Americans are defrauded.”

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“Whenever you have individuals who intentionally defraud the public for their own personal gain it corrupts a portion of our society,” stated Nathan Gray, Special Agent in Charge, FBI Phoenix Division. “Today’s sentencing is an example of how the FBI and its federal law enforcement partners as well as the Arizona Corporation Commission have worked together to effectively investigate this sophisticated fraud scheme and hold those accountable for their deceitful actions.”

“In cooperation with our law enforcement partners, the IRS Criminal Investigation Division will continue to vigorously pursue predators like Mr. Cope, who enrich themselves by shamelessly swindling others out of their hard-earned money,” stated IRS Criminal Investigation Division Special Agent In Charge Andrea Whelan. “Clearly, Cope’s schemes confirm the time tested truth that if it sounds too good to be true, it *is* too good to be true.”

The investigation in this case was conducted by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the FBI, the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division and the Arizona Corporation Commission. The prosecution was handled by Peter Sexton and Frank Galati, Assistant U.S. Attorneys, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

CASE NUMBER: CR-05-237-PHX-JAT
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