

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Jan. 25, 2007

FAA Employee in Atlantic County Convicted of Fraud
in Receipt of \$100,000 in Federal Disability Payments

(More)

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CAMDEN – An electronics technician with the Federal Aviation Administration in Atlantic County was convicted today on all six counts against him in connection with his receipt of \$100,000 in federal workers' compensation benefits while running an aviation-related business on the side and failing to report income while receiving the federal assistance, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

The jury in federal court convicted Jeffrey L. Bell, Sr., 55, of Vineland, on six counts. Counts One through Five charged Bell with completing and submitting forms to the U.S. Department of Labor to obtain workers' compensation benefits in which Bell falsely stated that he was not employed, self-employed, and had no income from such employment or self-employment. Count Six charged Bell with lying to federal agents during an interview on June 7, 2006. U.S. District Judge Robert B. Kugler scheduled sentencing for May 17, 2007.

Under the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, Bell faces a probable sentencing range of between 15 and 21 months in federal prison. Judge Kugler has wide discretion, however, in imposing sentence.

Bell, an electronics technician at the FAA William J. Hughes Technical Center, at Atlantic City International Airport, was indicted on the six counts on Sept. 5, 2006. He was originally charged and arrested on a criminal Complaint on July 23, 2006. Opening statements in the trial began on Jan. 16; closing arguments were on Jan. 24. The jury returned its verdict today after approximately five hours of deliberations over two days.

According to the charges against him and evidence at trial, Bell completed forms to obtain federal workers' compensation benefits and claimed, fraudulently, that he was not self-employed, had no involvement in any business enterprise, had not worked for any employer for the last 15 months, and had not received any income or actual earnings.

In about October 2001, Bell reported that he injured his neck when he fell out of a chair at his workplace. Over the course of approximately 15 months over two periods – March 2005 through September 2005 and from November 2005 through August 2006 – Bell received compensation benefits of more than \$100,000.

During the relevant periods in question in the Indictment – in contradiction to his certification that he had no other employment, self-employment or income and was unable carry out his normal duties for the FAA – Bell was the president and sole owner of U.S. Aircraft Instruments, Inc., at the Hammonton Airport, in Hammonton. His company repairs, installs, services, and inspects navigational devices in aircraft. Through this period, Bell operated and managed the company, performed repairs, inspections and services for a fee and earned income, none of which were disclosed on the forms to obtain federal workers' disability compensation. At trial, the evidence established that Bell,

through his company, had made in excess of \$130,000 in gross receipts between February 2004 through June 2006, some of which money Bell deposited into his personal bank account and his wife's personal bank account.

On June 7, 2006, federal agents interviewed Bell. When agents questioned him about his failure to report income on the federal forms for benefits, Bell stated that he had not received any income from any source after March 2005. Those statements were contrary to business records – including invoices, checks, credit card transactions, and other financial records that were introduced at trial.

Christie credited Special Agents of the Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, Office of Labor Racketeering and Fraud Investigations, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Marjorie Franzman, and the Defense Criminal Investigative Service, under the direction of Resident Agent in Charge James Murawski with the Bell investigation.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Anthony Moscato, of the U.S. Attorney's Office Strike Force Division in Newark.

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Defense Counsel: John J. Zarych, Northfield, N.J.