

NEWS

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Union City Man Convicted of Identity Theft and Related Frauds

(More)

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NEWARK – A federal jury today convicted a Union City man of identity theft, credit card fraud, mail and wire fraud and possession of counterfeit checks, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

The jury convicted Richard Tagliamonte, 57, on all eight counts of the Indictment against him after about eight hours of deliberations today and yesterday. U.S. District Judge Dennis M. Cavanaugh scheduled sentencing for June 4.

Tagliamonte was convicted for defrauding Tiffany & Co., Neiman Marcus, Toshiba, a Texas resident, and numerous credit card companies of more than \$100,000 between 2000 and 2004.

Trial evidence showed that Tagliamonte obtained corporate credit lines at Tiffany, Neiman Marcus, and Toshiba by applying to those retailers in the name of a long-defunct shipping company known as Victory Carriers in New York.

According to Assistant U.S. Attorneys Kevin Walsh and Seth Kosto, the trial also revealed that Tagliamonte used fake driver licenses and stolen birth certificates to obtain more than 20 unauthorized credit cards in the names of various people, including Sid Bass, one of the principals of Bass Enterprises Production Co., of Fort Worth, Texas.

Federal agents arrested Tagliamonte on Jan. 14, 2004, after he used one of several unauthorized Sid Bass credit cards to pay a New York City parking ticket, which led law enforcement to defendant's rental car located in Union City, New Jersey. The car was rented in Bass' name in December 2003 and January 2004, according to the evidence at trial. Once the rental car and Tagliamonte were located in Union City, a federal search warrant for the defendant's New Jersey apartment revealed much of the evidence used to convict him.

Some of the evidence recovered during the search warrant also revealed that, prior to relocating to Union City, defendant's previous base of fraud operations was Brewster, N.Y., at a retreat house owned by a religious order of Episcopal nuns known as the Community of the Holy Spirit. Two members of the religious order testified as government witnesses during the trial, including the sister to whom defendant gifted a Tiffany crystal bowl that was purchased by Tagliamonte using the fraudulent charge account.

Tagliamonte was convicted of two counts of mail fraud and one count of wire fraud, each of which carries a maximum statutory prison sentence of 20 years; one count of identity theft, which carries a maximum prison sentence of 15 years; two counts of counterfeit check possession, each of which carries a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison; and two counts of access device fraud (credit card fraud), each of which carries a maximum

penalty of 10 years in prison.

Christie credited the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, under the direction of Inspector in Charge Thomas C. van de Merlen, with developing the case against the defendant. Christie also recognized investigative contributions from the Paramus Police Department, Tiffany & Co. of New York, New York; the Neiman Marcus Group of Dallas, Texas; and Bass Enterprises Production Co. of Fort Worth, Texas.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Walsh and Kosto, both of the Commercial Crimes Unit in Newark.

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Defense counsel:
Timothy M. Donohue, Esq., West Orange