



## U.S. Department of Justice

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### NEWS RELEASE

Acting United States Attorney Andrew T. Baxter announced today that a Canadian man has been found guilty of fraud following a jury trial in Syracuse, New York.

GIL COUTO, 52, of Montreal, Quebec, was found guilty of conspiracy and two counts of mail fraud following a seven-day trial in federal court in Syracuse. COUTO owned Sky Tech Engineering, a company based in Montreal. COUTO was found guilty of using Sky Tech to defraud at least nineteen United States companies that sold computer-related products between February and July 2003. Sky Tech Engineering represented itself to be a pioneer in the computer service industry, a supplier of computer hardware and capable of designing and building computer systems for clients. Sky Tech established lines of credit with the American victim companies by ordering relatively small amounts of computer related equipment and promptly paying for that merchandise upon its receipt. Over time,

Sky Tech placed larger orders with the victim companies and upon receipt of the larger shipments would send as payment checks drawn on an account with insufficient funds, drawn on a closed account, checks upon which payment had been stopped, or would fail to make any form of payment at all. As a result, COUTO and his company fraudulently induced the American victim companies to ship merchandise worth more than three million dollars to Sky Tech in Montreal. Among the companies defrauded was TC Tech of Liverpool, which lost in excess of \$880,000 in the fraudulent scheme. Other victim companies were located in Texas, Tennessee, Missouri, California, Oklahoma, Maryland, Georgia, New Mexico, Florida, New Hampshire, Alabama, Virginia, North Carolina and Indiana.

COUTO is being held without bail pending sentencing. Chief United States District Court Judge Norman A. Mordue set sentencing for June 1, 2009 at 10:00 am in Syracuse. He faces a maximum sentence of 20 years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine on each count.

The case was investigated by the Montreal Police Department and the United States Secret Service. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Edward R. Broton, who can be reached at 315-448-0686.