

NEWS RELEASE



OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

San Diego, California

*United States Attorney
Laura E. Duffy*

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For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - April 16, 2012

United States Attorney Laura E. Duffy announced that today United States District Court Judge Michael M. Anello sentenced Steven Bartko to serve 24 months in custody for his role in a “ponzi scheme” that defrauded investors of over \$5 million. Bartko was also ordered to pay \$5,362,765 in restitution and was ordered to serve three years supervised release.

According to court documents, Bartko pled guilty on September 8, 2011, to a criminal information charging him with mail fraud and filing false income tax returns. According to court records and admissions in the plea agreement, Bartko, through his entity Starfire Technologies, operated a “ponzi scheme” and induced investors to send money to Starfire by falsely representing that Starfire was in the business of providing circuit boards and other electronic parts to government contractors. In addition, Bartko promised monthly returns to investors ranging from 5% to 8% ; falsely represented that Starfire was making in excess of 20% returns within 60 days on electronic parts that he supplied to government contractors; issued false account statements to investors indicating that they were routinely earning substantial positive returns; and created false invoices indicating that Starfire had deals with major government contractors.

Bartko also admitted that he defrauded the United States by filing fraudulent tax returns resulting in over \$123,000 in tax loss.

U.S. Attorney Duffy emphasized that financial fraud prosecutions remain an important priority for the Department of Justice. She stated that “the Court’s sentence and the significant restitution penalty will help bring justice and a sense of closure to the defendant’s victims.”

San Diego FBI Acting Special Agent in Charge Eric Birnbaum commented, “At a time when our nation faces economic challenges, the actions of individuals like Mr. Bartko undermine the citizenry's faith in our country’s ability to manage crises. The FBI is resolute and committed to pursuing those who, out of an abundance of greed, threaten the confidence of our economic system and way of life.”

Leslie P. DeMarco Special Agent in Charge of IRS Criminal Investigation Los Angeles Field Office commented, “IRS CI is proud to work with our law enforcement partners to stop Ponzi schemes and other related financial and tax crimes. We will continue to pursue those individuals who knowingly participate in Ponzi schemes and file fraudulent tax returns to protect the financial well being of the American public.”

This case was investigated by federal agents with Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigations.

DEFENDANT

Case No. 11cr-2075-MMA

Steven Bartko

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Title 18, United States Code, Section 1341 - Mail Fraud
Title 21, United States Code, Section 7201(1)

PARTICIPATING AGENCIES

Federal Bureau of Investigation
Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation