



Department of Justice

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JURY CONVICTS GEORGIA MAN IN \$29 MILLION INVESTMENT FRAUD AND MONEY LAUNDERING SCHEME

Anthony Christou Stole His Investors' Assets To Feed Multi-Million Dollar Gambling Habit

Atlanta, GA - Following a five day trial, a jury in federal district court returned a guilty verdict late yesterday against ANTHONY G. CHRISTOU, 57, of Dunwoody, Georgia, on charges of wire fraud and money laundering relating to an investment fraud scheme.

“This defendant personally met with dozens of victims, telling each that he would use their money to underwrite legitimate mortgages. He knew at the time that he had no intention of using his investors' money legitimately, but rather that their funds would be put to use in keeping a massive Ponzi scheme afloat,” said United States Attorney David E. Nahmias. “Mr. Christou racked up more than \$29 million in fraudulent investment in just two years, a significant portion of which was diverted to his gambling activities. The jury's verdict after only five hours of deliberation and the likelihood of a long prison sentence in this case should send a clear message that this type of fraud will not be tolerated.”

Rebecca A. Sparkman, Special Agent in Charge, IRS Criminal Investigation, said, “Nearly a century after the first Ponzi scheme was prosecuted, unscrupulous individuals have continued to use this scheme to defraud innocent investors. IRS Criminal Investigation will do its part to 'hold the line' against such individuals in order to protect the investing public.”

According to Nahmias and the evidence presented in court at trial: Between January 2004 and January 2006, CHRISTOU, who was at the time president of his own mortgage company, “Atlas Mortgage Inc.,” engaged in a scheme wherein he and others acting on his behalf solicited individuals, including business associates, personal friends and members of his church, to invest with him. CHRISTOU informed his investors that he would use their money to underwrite safe and secure “bridge loans” for wealthy individuals who were selling a house and needed funds to use as a down payment on newly acquired real property or to assist real estate developers with their short term capital needs. CHRISTOU entered into short term promissory notes with his lenders, the terms of which were dictated by CHRISTOU, to memorialize their investment.

CHRISTOU falsely represented that his investors' money would be secured by his borrowers' equity and would be repaid, with substantial interest, in a short period of time. Between January 2004 and January 2006, CHRISTOU took in more than \$29 million from investors, purportedly to fund bridge loans. Instead, he used his investors' funds to repay his principal and interest obligations to earlier investors and, unbeknownst to his later investors, laundered more than \$7 million of their assets to fund his gambling activities at casinos in Nevada, Mississippi, and New Jersey.

CHRISTOU was indicted by a federal grand jury on November 20, 2006. The four wire fraud counts for which he has now been convicted each carry a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000 per count. The three money laundering counts each carry a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000 per count or not more than twice the amount of the criminally derived property involved in each money laundering transaction. Sentencing is scheduled for May 6, 2008 at 9:30 a.m. before United States District Judge William S. Duffey, Jr.

This case was investigated by Special Agents of the Internal Revenue Service.

Assistant United States Attorneys Paul Monnin and Justin Anand are prosecuting the case.

For further information please contact David E. Nahmias (pronounced NAH-me-us), United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan.