

# NEWS

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United States Department of Justice  
U.S. Attorney, District of New Jersey  
970 Broad Street, Seventh Floor  
Newark, New Jersey 07102

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***Christopher J. Christie, U.S. Attorney***

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***More Information?*** Call the Assistant U.S. Attorney or other contact listed below to see if more information is available.

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olso1220.rel  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Dec. 20, 2007

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## Bergen County Man Admits Theft of Goya Painting

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NEWARK – A Bergen County man pleaded guilty today to conspiring to steal the Francisco de Goya painting “Children with a Cart,” U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

Steven Lee Olson, 54, of Carlstadt, pleaded guilty today before U.S. District Judge Dennis M. Cavanaugh to conspiring to steal the Spanish master’s 1778 masterpiece as it was in transit to the Guggenheim Museum in New York City from the Toledo Museum of Art in Toledo, Ohio. The Toledo Museum of Art owned the painting, and at the time of its theft had insured it for more than \$1 million. Olson was indicted on Oct. 22 and charged with the theft.

Olson’s co-conspirator, Roman Szurko, 27, of Roxbury Township, pleaded guilty to the same conspiracy charge before Judge Cavanaugh on Monday and admitted his role in the theft. Both defendants are scheduled to be sentenced by Judge Cavanaugh on March 24. Olson has been detained since his arrest on Oct. 23. Szurko, for whom Monday was his first appearance in court in connection with the case, is free on a \$100,000 personal recognizance bond pending sentencing.

“Their first mistake was breaking into the truck,” said Christie. “Their second was thinking no one would be suspicious when they were brazen enough to attempt to claim the reward.”

At his plea hearing, Olson admitted arriving at Szurko’s home on Nov. 8, 2007. Olson, who at the time also lived in Roxbury, and Szurko traveled west on Route 80 to the parking lot of a Holiday Inn in Bartonsville, Pa.

Olson admitted breaking into a white, climate-controlled moving truck and taking the painting and bags of tools from the truck. Olson and Szurko then went back to Olson’s residence and hid the painting there. After the Toledo Museum of Art offered a \$50,000 reward for information leading to the recovery of the painting, the two men turned in the painting, claiming they had discovered it in a basement wall in Olson’s residence. Both men admitted that they were attempting to collect the reward for the painting they had stolen.

Olson, a truck driver, and Szurko, a restaurant employee, both pleaded guilty to conspiracy to steal an object of cultural heritage, for which they face a statutory maximum penalty of five years in federal prison and a \$250,000 fine.

In determining the actual sentences, Judge Cavanaugh will consult the Advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offenses, the defendants’ criminal histories, if any, and other factors. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines and

determining sentences. Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodian terms must serve nearly all that time.

Christie credited Special Agents of the FBI under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun in Newark with the investigation of Olson and Szurko.

The government was represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Seth Kosto and Melissa Jampol of the Criminal Division in Newark.

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Defense counsel:

Joseph Ferrante, Esq., Newark (for Olson)

John Williams, Esq., Hamburg (for Szurko)