

NEWS

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Union City Man Sentenced to 15 Years for Identity Theft and Credit Card Frauds

(More)

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NEWARK – A federal judge today sentenced a Union City man to 15 years in federal prison for his convictions for identity theft, credit card fraud, mail and wire fraud, and possession of counterfeit checks, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

U.S. District Judge Dennis M. Cavanaugh also fined Richard Tagliamonte \$40,000 and ordered him to pay \$128,296 in restitution. Tagliamonte has been in custody since his arrest on Jan. 14, 2004.

In February 2007, a jury convicted Tagliamonte, 58, on all eight counts of the Indictment against him. Tagliamonte was convicted of defrauding Texas billionaire Sid Bass, Tiffany & Co., Neiman Marcus, Toshiba, and numerous credit card companies of more than \$100,000 between 2000 and 2004. The jury also convicted Tagliamonte for possessing two fraudulent checks worth \$837,900.

Under the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, Tagliamonte faced a probable sentencing range of between 84 and 105 months because of the large amount – nearly \$1 million – in actual and intended losses due to his frauds. Judge Cavanaugh, however, using his sentencing discretion, went well above the advisory sentencing range. Judge Cavanaugh said the long sentence was needed to protect the public and prevent Tagliamonte from committing new crimes. Judge Cavanaugh referred to the defendant as a “liar” and “a fraud.”

“This is a long and well-deserved prison sentence,” said Christie. “Tagliamonte was cunning in his ability to defraud and is clearly someone for whom prison is the only deterrent.”

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., located in 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’s 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, including the two fraudulent checks.

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 defendant using the fraudulent charge account.

Christie credited the United States Postal Inspection Service, under the direction of Inspector in Charge David L. Collins, with developing the case against the defendant. Christie also recognized investigative contributions from the Paramus and Weehawken Police Departments, Tiffany & Co. of New York; the Neiman Marcus Group of Dallas; and Bass Enterprises Production Co. of Fort Worth, Texas.

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

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