



*United States Attorney
Southern District of New York*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DECEMBER 23, 2008**

**CONTACT: U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
YUSILL SCRIBNER
REBEKAH CARMICHAEL
JANICE OH
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
(212) 637-2600**

**USPIS
ALLAN K. WEISSMANN
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
(212) 330-2270**

**BROOKLYN MAN CHARGED WITH PONZI SCHEME TARGETING
FELLOW EL CAMINO CHURCH MEMBERS**

LEV L. DASSIN, the Acting United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and RONALD J. VERROCHIO, the Inspector-in-Charge of the New York Office of the United States Postal Inspection Service ("USPIS"), announced the arrest today of BRYANT ISMAIL RODRIGUEZ, a/k/a Bryant Rodriguez, a/k/a Rubin Rodriguez, a/k/a Salvador Rodriguez, a/k/a Robert Rodriguez, a/k/a Ishmael Rodriguez, for allegedly perpetrating a Ponzi scheme to defraud fellow members of the El Camino Church and their friends. According to the criminal Complaint filed in Manhattan federal court:

Commencing in approximately mid-2007, RODRIGUEZ, a member of El Camino Church in the Washington Heights neighborhood of Manhattan, told the church's pastor and other members that he was involved with an electronics distribution company named (or with a name similar to) "C&E Communications & Electronics, Inc.," ("C&E") that purportedly had contracts to sell electronic products to a number of large electronic products retailers. RODRIGUEZ offered opportunities to the pastor and to various members of the Church to invest in C&E, promising investment returns in the amount of thirty percent or more every month. Several members did invest and receive initial returns on their investments, after which they, or friends and family of theirs, invested additional money with RODRIGUEZ. C&E did not, however, have any contracts with the electronics retailers RODRIGUEZ named, and RODRIGUEZ did not make payments to investors in the amounts promised. Thus far investments with RODRIGUEZ in the total amount of approximately \$960,000 have been identified;

return payments, however, have only been identified in the amount of about \$415,000.

RODRIGUEZ, 44, is charged with one count of mail fraud, which carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison.

RODRIGUEZ is expected to be presented later today before United States Magistrate Judge FRANK MAAS in Manhattan federal court.

MR. DASSIN thanked the USPIS for its work in this investigation, and said the investigation is continuing.

This prosecution is being handled by the Major Crimes Unit of the United States Attorney's Office. Assistant United States Attorney SARAH LAI is in charge of the prosecution.

If you believe you were a victim of this crime, including a victim entitled to restitution, and you wish to provide information to law enforcement and/or receive notice of future developments in the case or additional information, please contact Wendy Olsen-Clancy, the Victim Witness Coordinator at the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, at (866) 874-8900 or Wendy.Olsen@usdoj.gov. For additional information, go to: <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/nys/victimwitness.html> on the Internet.

The charges contained in the Complaint are merely accusations, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

08-344

###