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**March 11, 2009**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/md>**

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FORT WASHINGTON MAN CHARGED IN MORTGAGE FRAUD SCHEME

Case Investigated by the Maryland and Washington, D.C. Mortgage Fraud  
Task Forces

Greenbelt, Maryland - Robert Dewain Venson, age 38, of Fort Washington, Maryland was arrested today for mail and wire fraud, money laundering and failing to file tax returns in connection with a three year mortgage fraud scheme involving 13 residential properties, announced United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein. The indictment was returned on February 23, 2009 and unsealed today upon his arrest. Venson had his initial appearance in federal district court in Greenbelt today and was released under the supervision of U.S. Pretrial Services and ordered, among other things, not to engage in real estate transactions of over \$5,000.

According to the 26 count indictment, from 2004 to 2007 Venson negotiated the purchase of 13 residential properties in Maryland and the District of Columbia, including houses in Hyattsville, Ocean City, Fort Washington and Salisbury, Maryland. Rather than purchase the properties in his own name, Venson allegedly paid straw buyers to appear at the settlement posing as the buyer. Venson typically would represent to the straw buyer that he would pay the loan obligation. Venson allegedly inflated the price listed on the sales documents to an amount substantially larger than the actual price, causing the mortgage lender to provide funds for the purchase substantially in excess of the actual price. Venson allegedly misrepresented and concealed the true purchase price, his arrangement with the straw buyer and other material information from the mortgage lender. Under this scheme, Venson allegedly reaped hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The indictment also alleges that Venson failed to file individual federal income tax returns for 2004, 2005 and 2006, during the period of the scheme. Based on the mortgage fraud scheme, the indictment seeks forfeiture of property, including a money judgment of \$892,371.

Venson faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison for each of the eight counts of mail fraud, each of the eight counts of wire fraud and each of the seven counts of money laundering; and one year in prison for each of the three counts of failure to file tax returns.

An indictment is not a finding of guilt. An individual charged by indictment is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty at some later criminal proceedings.

This prosecution is being brought jointly by the Maryland and Washington, D.C. Mortgage Fraud Task Forces, which are comprised of federal, state and local law enforcement agencies in Maryland, Washington, D.C. and Northern Virginia. The Task Forces were formed to promote the early detection, identification, prevention and prosecution of various kinds of mortgage fraud schemes. This case, as well as other cases brought by members of the Task Forces, demonstrates the commitment of law enforcement agencies to protect consumers from fraud and help to ensure the integrity of the mortgage market and other credit markets. Information about mortgage fraud prosecutions is available on the internet at <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/md/Mortgage-Fraud/index.html>.

United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein thanked the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service for their investigative work. Mr. Rosenstein commended Assistant United States Attorneys Michael R. Pauze and Robert Hur, who are prosecuting the case.

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