



U.S. Department of Justice

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PRESS RELEASE

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PIRELA OF UNIQUE GEMS INTERNATIONAL ENTERS GUILTY PLEA

Marcos Daniel Jiménez, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, and Hector M. Pesquera, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, announced today that Mr. Enrique Pirela has entered a guilty plea to charges of conspiracy to commit mail fraud, wire fraud and money laundering in connection with the Unique Gems International fraud case.

The Indictment alleged that from September 1995 through March 1997, Mr. Pirela, 55, served as President of Unique Gems International Corp. (UGI) in Miami. Mr. Pirela admitted he induced people to deposit approximately \$90,000,000 in UGI as security for a work-at-home jewelry scheme. The Indictment alleged that victims were told that they would be paid as much as \$60 per piece to assemble jewelry. The victims were directed to make a deposit of \$3,000 with UGI, and that they would receive a jewelry kit equipped to make 30 necklaces. The actual value of the kit was approximately only \$100. The Indictment further alleges that Mr. Pirela and the other defendants laundered the proceeds of the fraud through the accounts of businesses in Liechtenstein, which were owned by some of the defendants. Near the end of the UGI scheme, Mr. Pirela withdrew \$1,000,000 in cash from the UGI account at First Union National Bank in Miami, Florida, and caused it to be deposited into a UGI account at Bank von Ernst & CIE AG, Zurich, Switzerland.

Mr. Pirela entered a guilty plea this morning to a count of conspiracy to commit money laundering and to a count of conspiracy to commit mail and wire fraud. When sentenced on April 11, 2003, by United States District Court Judge Ursula Ungaro-Benages, Mr. Pirela faces a possible 25 years imprisonment and fines of upwards of twice the value of the loss.

Mr. Jiménez commended the investigative efforts of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Mr. Jiménez additionally commended Assistant State Attorney General Jody Collins for her invaluable assistance in this case. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Kerry S. Baron and Ellen Cohen.

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