



*United States Attorney
District of New Jersey*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 16, 2010

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**THREE NEW YORK MEN PLEAD GUILTY TO ILLEGALLY TRANSMITTING
CASH TO RABBI AND COOPERATING WITNESS**

TRENTON, N.J. – Three men who operated unlicensed money transmitting businesses in New York pleaded guilty today to operating the illegal businesses, admitting they transferred large amounts of cash to a cooperating witness and to Rabbi Mordchai Fish, the then-principal rabbi of Congregation Sheves Achim in Brooklyn, N.Y., United States Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

Avrohom Y. Polack, a/k/a “Abraham Pollack,” 41, and Naftoly Weber, 42, both of Brooklyn; and Binyomin Spira, a/k/a “Benjamin Spira,” 29, of Spring Valley, N.Y., each pleaded guilty before United States District Judge Joel A. Pisano to separate Informations charging them with operating unlicensed money transmitting businesses, or “cash houses,” out of locations in Brooklyn.

According to documents filed in the case and statements made during the guilty plea proceedings:

Polack and Weber admitted that from January 2009 through July 2009, they operated an unlicensed money transmitting business with other individuals, transferring thousands of dollars in cash to Rabbi Fish and a cooperating witness. Each admitted to participating in the transfer of approximately \$25,000 and \$90,000 on two separate occasions.

Spira admitted that between January 2009 and May 2009, he operated an unlicensed money transmitting business out of an apartment and a bakery in Brooklyn. He admitted to transmitting approximately \$30,000 to the cooperating witness at the behest of New Jersey rabbi Eliahu Ben Haim – and an additional approximately \$197,500 to the cooperating witness, Rabbi Fish, and co-conspirator Levi Deutsch in May 2009.

The defendants were originally charged by criminal Complaints on July 23, 2009, as part of a takedown of 44 individuals for alleged public corruption and international money laundering offenses. At that time, both Polack and Weber were charged with conspiring with Rabbi Fish, 58 and Rabbi Lavel Schwartz, 59, both of Brooklyn, to launder money. Spira was charged in a complaint with Deutsch, 34, of Israel, with money laundering. Rabbi Ben Haim, 59, of Elberon, N.J., entered a guilty plea to money laundering on June 17, 2010, and awaits sentencing. The charges against Rabbi Fish, Rabbi Schwartz and Deutsch remain pending.

The charge to which Polack, Weber and Spira pleaded guilty carries a maximum statutory

penalty of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. In addition, Weber and Polack agreed not to contest the forfeiture of \$167, 270.26 that was seized from their office by the FBI on July 23, 2009, and agreed to forfeit an additional \$12,500 by the date of sentencing. Sentencing for the defendants is scheduled for February 16, 2011.

U.S. Attorney Fishman credited special agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Michael B. Ward, and special agents of the Internal Revenue Service – Criminal Investigation, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Victor W. Lessoff, for the investigation leading to today’s guilty pleas.

In the cases involving Weber, Polack and Spira, the government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Mark J. McCarren of the U.S. Attorney’s Office Special Prosecutions Division in Newark.

The charges and allegations contained in the Complaints against Fish, Schwartz and Deutsch are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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Defense Counsel:

Polack: Susan R. Necheles, Esq., New York, N.Y.

Weber: Joseph Hayden, Jr. & Alan Silber, Esqs., Roseland, N.J.

Spira: Avi Moskowitz, Esq., New York, N.Y.