

NEWS

United States Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney, District of New Jersey
970 Broad Street, Seventh Floor
Newark, New Jersey 07102



PAUL J. FISHMAN, U.S. Attorney

More Information? Call the contact listed below to see if more information is available.

News on the Internet. News Releases and related documents are posted at our website.
Go to: www.justice.gov/usao/nj

MAUREEN NAKLY
Assistant U.S. Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 15, 2010

Third Brooklyn Man Pleads Guilty to Illegally Transmitting Cash to Rabbi and Cooperating Witness

(More)

Public Affairs Office
Rebekah Carmichael

973-645-2888

TRENTON, N.J. – A Brooklyn, New York man pleaded guilty today to operating an illegal money transmitting business that transferred large amounts of cash to a cooperating witness and to Rabbi Eliahu Ben Haim, the then-principal rabbi of Congregation Ohel Yaacob in Deal, New Jersey, United States Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

Akiva Aryeh Weiss (a/k/a “Arye Weiss”), 54, pleaded guilty before United States District Judge Joel A. Pisano to a one-count Information that charged him with operating an unlicensed money transmitting business, or “cash house,” out of a location in Brooklyn.

At his plea hearing, Weiss admitted that, from June 2007 to July 2009, he operated an unlicensed money transmitting business with individuals residing in Israel, and that in conducting his business from a location in Brooklyn, he transferred thousands of dollars in cash to Ben Haim and a cooperating witness who was acting for Ben Haim. Weiss admitted that, during the relevant period, he transferred between \$200,000 and \$400,000 in cash to Ben Haim and the cooperating witness.

Today’s guilty plea stems from a two-track undercover Federal Bureau of Investigation (“FBI”) investigation into public corruption and international money laundering which resulted in the charging of 44 individuals via criminal Complaints on July 23, 2009. At that time, Weiss was charged with conspiring with Rabbi Eliahu Ben Haim, 59, of Elberon, New Jersey, to launder money and operate an unlicensed money transmitting business. Other “cash house” operators, Yeshaye Ehrental (a/k/a “Yeshayahu Ehrental”) and Schmuel Cohen (a/k/a “Schmulik Cohen”), also were charged on that same date with conspiring with Ben Haim. On April 14, 2010, Ehrental and Cohen pleaded guilty before Judge Pisano to operating illegal money transmitting businesses.

The charge to which Weiss pleaded guilty carries a maximum statutory penalty of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. Judge Pisano continued Weiss’ release on a \$300,000 bond and home detention with electronic monitoring pending sentencing. In addition, at the plea hearing, Weiss agreed not to contest the forfeiture of \$157,757 in U.S. currency that was seized from his business by the FBI on July 23, 2009. Weiss, Ehrental, and Cohen are scheduled to be sentenced by Judge Pisano on July 26, 2010, at 10:00 a.m. The case against Ben Haim is pending.

In determining an actual sentence, Judge Pisano will consult the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which recommend sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offenses, the defendant’s criminal history, if any, and other factors, including acceptance of responsibility. The judge, however, has discretion and is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all of that time.

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 Division, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge William P. Offord, for the investigation leading to today's guilty plea. The case involving Weiss is being handled by Assistant U.S. Attorney Maureen Nakly of the U.S. Attorney's Office Special Prosecutions Division in Newark.

The charges and allegations contained in the Complaint against Ben Haim are merely accusations, and Ben Haim is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

10-106

###

Defense Counsel: Gino Josh Singer, Esq., New York, NY