



Department of Justice

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CLOSING ATTORNEY SENTENCED TO OVER 3 YEARS IN PRISON IN MORTGAGE FRAUD SCHEME

Sentence Reduced Due To Cooperation With The Government

Atlanta, GA - CHRISTOPHER HALCOMB, 45, of Cumming, Georgia, a former Atlanta area real estate closing attorney, was sentenced today by United States District Court Judge Thomas W. Thrash, Jr., on charges of conspiracy to commit bank, mail and wire fraud, loan application fraud and money laundering.

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias said of the case, "We still continue to see professionals in the real estate industry betraying the trust of their clients and selling out to greed and fraud. But this attorney made at least one better decision that was critical. He quickly decided to cooperate fully with the government in a large-scale investigation and to testify truthfully at trial. The judge recognized that such cooperation should have a significant positive impact at sentencing."

HALCOMB was sentenced to 3 years, 1 month in federal prison, to be followed by 3 years of supervised release. He was also ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$15,619,742. HALCOMB has been on bond since his guilty plea to the charges on January 24, 2006.

HALCOMB was a real estate closing attorney for PHILLIP E. HILL, 49, of Bloundstown, Florida, and also did legal work for HILL's related business entities. On March 14, 2007, HILL and nine co-defendants were found guilty of related mortgage fraud charges by a federal jury after an eight-week-long trial. HALCOMB testified on behalf of the United States during that trial.

According to the evidence presented in court, HALCOMB participated in the mortgage fraud scheme orchestrated by HILL between early 2000 and early 2001. With the assistance of HALCOMB, HILL and his co-defendants defrauded financial institutions and other mortgage lenders by fraudulently inflating property values and submitting false borrower qualifying information to obtain mortgage loans, using the mails to transmit false qualifying information and wire transfers to move the scheme

proceeds. In the overall scheme, the defendants conspired to use straw borrowers to apply for fraudulently inflated loans totaling over \$100 million over a period of approximately three years. False employment, income, assets and liabilities were listed on loan applications to qualify the straw borrowers for these loans. HALCOMB and closing attorney ANDREW WOLF of Alpharetta, Georgia, who has pleaded guilty and will be sentenced at a later date, assisted HILL in defrauding the lenders and laundered the loan proceeds through their respective escrow accounts.

On January 8, 2007, the Georgia State Supreme Court disbarred HALCOMB based upon his admission of the conviction and his voluntary surrender of his license to practice law in the State of Georgia.

This case was investigated by Special Agents of the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation, with the assistance of Inspectors of the United States Postal Inspection Service. The United States Attorney's Office also wishes to thank residents and neighborhood associations in the Atlanta area for their assistance in this case.

Assistant United States Attorney Barbara E. Nelan prosecuted the case.

For further information please contact David E. Nahmias (pronounced NAH-me-us), United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan.