



Department of Justice

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias
Northern District of Georgia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

07/26/06

<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan/>

CONTACT: Patrick Crosby

(404)581-6016

FAX (404)581-6160

LOCAL JEWELER ARRESTED IN IRS UNDERCOVER OPERATION;
SEARCH WARRANTS EXECUTED AT 2 STORES, 2 HOMES
FOR LAUNDERING DRUG MONEY

Atlanta, GA -TOROS SEHER, 38, of Atlanta and Alpharetta, Georgia, has been indicted by a federal grand jury and search warrants have been executed late this afternoon at four locations in Atlanta and Alpharetta, relating to a money laundering scheme that allegedly funneled illegal drug profits through SEHER's two jewelry stores in the Atlanta area. The jewelry stores, "Chaplin's" and "Chaplin's Midtown," were also indicted. SEHER was arrested without incident late this afternoon, and is expected to have his initial appearance before a federal magistrate tomorrow.

United States Attorney David Nahmias said of the case, "To make their criminal enterprises work, drug dealers need to launder the dirty money they make selling poison in our communities. When apparently legitimate businesses and their owners knowingly accept the proceeds of drug-dealing, they commit serious crimes and face serious consequences. Mr. Seher and his jewelry stores started facing those consequences today."

IRS Criminal Investigation Special Agent In Charge Rebecca A. Sparkman said, "IRS Criminal Investigation's mission in narcotics law enforcement is to financially disrupt and dismantle organizations that launder drug money. The attack on money laundering is an essential front in the war on narcotics."

According to United States Attorney Nahmias, the indictment and the search warrant affidavits filed in this case: SEHER's jewelry stores, "Chaplin's," located in the Merchandise Mart/America's Mart in downtown Atlanta and "Chaplin's Midtown," located in nearby Atlantic Station, were allegedly used by cooperating witnesses, cooperating defendants, and real and purported undercover IRS agents to launder drug proceeds, under the direction of SEHER. In many cases, the cash amounts allegedly laundered by SEHER through the jewelry stores exceeded \$10,000, and at times \$20,000 to \$30,000, in United States currency for each purchase. Under the law, cash purchases

exceeding \$10,000 are required to be reported to the IRS on specific forms (Form 8300). The indictment alleges SEHER did not report these large cash transactions, and knew that the jewelry sales were being used to launder the money from criminal activity.

Cooperating defendants and witnesses provided historical information regarding the alleged money laundering habits of SEHER dating as far back as 1997, when SEHER opened up his first jewelry store (Diamond & Gold Depot) located inside the Greenbriar Mall in Atlanta. Starting in April 2005, IRS undercover agents made three cash purchases exceeding \$10,000 from SEHER, for a wedding set, a Rolex watch and two diamond bracelets. During these purchases, IRS undercover agents made audio and video tapes, which reflect SEHER advising the undercover agent to “use any name and address” when filling out the forms, as well as making “choking gestures” suggesting the customer was “saying too much” regarding the source of the money, i.e., illegal narcotics trafficking. SEHER also told the undercover agents to make payments of less than \$10,000 and intentionally disguised cash transactions without filling out required IRS forms.

Search warrants were executed this morning at the two jewelry stores owned and/or operated by SEHER, as well as his residence in Alpharetta and a condominium in the Atlantic Station area.

A forfeiture provision in the indictment applies to illegal proceeds of SEHER and his businesses. SEHER faces up to 20 years imprisonment on each of the four counts charging money laundering or conspiracy to launder money, and up to 5 years imprisonment on each count of failing to file the required Form 8300 for large cash transactions.

Members of the public are reminded that the indictment contains only allegations. A defendant is presumed innocent of the charges and it will be the government's burden to prove a defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt at trial.

This case is being investigated by IRS-Criminal Investigation; and the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Atlanta Police Department as part of the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Task Force.

Assistant United States Attorney J. Gabriel Banks is prosecuting the case.

For further information please contact David E. Nahmias (pronounced NAH-me-us), United States Attorney or Charysse 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.