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NEWS RELEASE

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FLORIDA MAN ACCUSED OF EMBEZZLING FROM KANSAS MOSQUE CONVICTED ON TAX FRAUD CHARGES

KANSAS CITY, KAN. – United States Attorney Eric Melgren announced that **FAROOQ A. ESSA**, 56, currently of Orange Point, Fla., previously of Overland Park, Kan., has been convicted on two counts of filing fraudulent income tax returns with the Internal Revenue Service.

The verdict was delivered Nov. 18, 2004 at the end of a three-day trial before U.S. District Court Judge Carlos Murguia in Kansas City, Kan.

According to testimony at trial, ESSA embezzled more than \$230,000 from his mosque, the Ismail Community jamatkhana located, at the time, in his home in Overland Park but which is now located in Olathe, Kan. The embezzlement resulted in a tax loss of \$69,649. The Ismaili Muslim Community is a sect of the Shia branch of Islam whose spiritual leader is Prince Aga Kahn, believed by his followers to be the closest living relative of the prophet Mohammed.

The jury convicted ESSA on one count of reporting to the IRS on Feb. 28, 2000 that in tax year 1999 his total income was \$76,334, when in fact he received an additional \$112,814 that he did not report; and one count of reporting to the IRS on Feb. 2, 2001 that in the 2000 tax year his total income was \$47,734, when in fact he received an additional \$118,573 that he did not report.

The defendant faces a maximum penalty of not more than three years in federal prison and a \$100,000 fine for each count of conviction. Sentencing is set for 10:30 a.m. on Jan. 24, 2005.

Melgren commended the work of Special Agent Robert Jackson of the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation Division. Assistant U.S. Attorney Marietta Parker prosecuted the case.

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