



PRESS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 03, 2001**

For Information Contact Public Affairs
Mike Johns (602) 514-7566

LEROY SCHWEITZER ASSOCIATE CONVICTED OF TAX CRIMES

PHOENIX, ARIZONA -- The United States Attorney's Office for the District of Arizona, announced today that RICHARD DONALD COOPER, of Littlefield, Arizona was convicted October 2, 2001, by a federal jury at Phoenix, Arizona, of corruptly obstructing the IRS, in violation of 26 U.S.C. § 7212, and making a false income tax refund claim, in violation 18 U.S.C. § 287.

The evidence at trial showed that Cooper sent a worthless "lien draft", made out for approximately \$86,000, to attempt to pay off more than \$43,000 in income taxes he owed the IRS and to qualify for a \$43,000 tax refund. According to the evidence, Cooper also attempted to secure a \$200,000 draft to similarly defraud the State of Utah.

"Lien drafts" are fraudulent securities mostly issued by Leroy Schweitzer during the mid-1990's. Schweitzer, one of the leaders of the Montana Freeman, is now serving 22 years in federal prison for fraud and other federal crimes. The drafts Cooper used, or intended to use, were provided to him by Schweitzer

The case was tried before United States District Court Judge Earl H. Carroll. The jury returned its guilty verdict on October 2, 2000.

(MORE)

A conviction for making false claims against the IRS carries a maximum penalty of 5 years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both. A conviction for corruptly obstructing the IRS carries a maximum penalty of 3 years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both.

The investigation leading to the guilty verdict was conducted by Special Agents of the Phoenix Field Office of Internal Revenue Service Criminal investigation.

Sentencing is set before Judge Carroll on December 17, 2001.

The prosecution was handled by the United States Attorney's Office, District of Arizona, Phoenix, Arizona.

CASE NUMBER: CR-98-861-PHX-EHC
RELEASE NUMBER: 2001-114

#