

U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
Eastern District of Virginia*

*World Trade Center 757/441-6331
Suite 8000, 101 West Main Street
Norfolk, Va. 23510*

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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For Further Info:
Deanna Warren (757) 441-6331

Norfolk, Virginia – Paul J. McNulty, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, announced that Gregory Lawrence Tropea, age 41, and Alice Lorraine Askew, age 46, both of Hampton, Virginia, both pleaded guilty on May 28, 2003, in U.S. District Court in Norfolk, Virginia, to charges of conspiracy to commit structuring offenses against the United States and conspiracy to file false tax returns. Tropea was also convicted of one count of possession of child pornography.

Askew faces a maximum prison term of ten years imprisonment and a \$500,000.00 fine when sentenced on October 7, 2003; Tropea faces a maximum of 15 years imprisonment and a \$750,000.00 fine when sentenced on September 3, 2003. United States District Judge Jerome B. Friedman will be the sentencing judge for both defendants.

The investigation of this case began after the Internal Revenue Service received a call from the Colorado Police Department. They had arrested Tropea and Askew for theft and at the time of the arrest, they had cash, two-way radios and records reflecting \$3,000,000.00 in stock transactions in their possession.

A January 31, 2002, search of their residence in Hampton, Virginia, revealed \$108,000.00 in cash which was seized. Also seized was a computer belonging to Tropea that contained numerous images of child pornography.

Further investigation revealed that for over three years, Tropea and Askew traveled the United States and burglarized small businesses, stealing cash from their in-store safes. Askew's role was to distract the owners or employees, while Tropea took the money. The cash proceeds were either deposited directly into their accounts, or used to purchase cashier's checks or money orders in their names. Tropea and Askew negotiated over one-half million dollars in cash transactions, most of which were in amounts of less than \$10,000.00. The cash transactions were made in this manner in order to conceal income from the IRS and other law enforcement authorities. The total amount of cashier's checks and/or money orders purchased was approximately \$290,000.00 and the total unreported income to IRS was over \$642,000.00.

Also making this announcement is Eileen J. O'Connor, Assistant Attorney General, Tax Division, U.S. Department of Justice.

The tax and structuring charges were investigated by Internal Revenue Service. The possession of child pornography charge was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Virginia State Police. Assistant United States Attorney Robert J. Seidel, Jr. prosecuted the case, and was assisted by Krista Tongring, with the Tax Division, Department of Justice.

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