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### "RENAISSANCE, THE TAX PEOPLE" PROMOTER PLEADS GUILTY TO \$75 MILLION FRAUD

TOPEKA, KAN. – **Todd Eugene Strand**, 36, of Murrieta, Calif., pleaded guilty Monday in federal district court in Kansas City, Kan., to conspiracy to defraud the United States in the assessment and computation of taxes and mail fraud charges for his involvement in a tax fraud scheme promoted by the Topeka, Kan.- based Renaissance, The Tax People, Inc.

"As a national marketing director for Renaissance, Mr. Strand peddled a fraudulent "tax relief system" through promotional meetings, conferences, rallies, conference calls, and promotions by mail," said Eric Melgren, United States Attorney for the District of Kansas.

The guilty plea was announced jointly Monday by the Office of the United States Attorney for the District of Kansas and the United States Department of Justice, Tax Division.

"People who promote or participate in schemes to evade federal income taxes harm not only the Federal Treasury, but all honest taxpayers," said Eileen J. O'Connor, Assistant Attorney General for the Justice Department's Tax Division. "Working together with the Internal Revenue Service and United States Attorney's Offices, the Tax Division has made investigating and prosecuting such crimes a high priority."

The indictment in *United States v. Michael C. Cooper et al.* alleged that from June 1997 through April 2002, Strand and co-defendants Daniel Joel Gleason, Michael Craig Cooper, and Jesse Ayala Cota operated a scheme to defraud the IRS and individuals by marketing a program designed to sell individuals illegal tax deductions through false and misleading representations. Strand pled guilty to Count One of the superseding indictment, which charged conspiracy to commit mail and wire fraud and defraud the United States, in connection with the promotion of a fraudulent tax scheme. Strand also pleaded guilty to a separate charge of aiding and abetting mail fraud.

In his plea, Strand admitted that beginning in November 1995 he served as coconspirator Michael Craig Cooper's right-hand man. Strand held the position of Vice-President of Renaissance, the Tax People, Inc. By Aug. 23, 1999, Strand was the National Marketing Director for Renaissance, and earned more than \$250,000 in income from his involvement with Renaissance.

According to the indictment, Renaissance's tax package, which went by various names including the "Tax Relief System," offered its customers tax return preparation, tax advice and audit protection services. Renaissance claimed that its customers could lawfully reduce their income taxes by deducting personal expenses as legitimate business expenses by following this program.

Renaissance charged customers between \$300 and \$1,200 to join and an additional \$100 monthly per package purchased. Renaissance promoted that the program would pay for itself through