

Nissani Sentenced

Mohammed Ali Nissani was sentenced to ten years imprisonment this month for conspiring to steal hundreds of thousands of dollars from Kuukpik Native Corporation and for transporting the money to foreign banks, United States Attorney Michael R. Spaan announced.

United States District Court Judge Russell Holland approved of a plea agreement between Nissani and the United States government, which called for Nissani to receive ten years imprisonment.

Judge Holland stated, "The sentences imposed against Nissani are extremely stiff. It is appropriate in this case... This is the worst white collar crime I have heard about in my 20 years in Alaska.

"Defendant Nissani is an accountant and trained in such matters... I believe defendant Nissani knows perfectly well where every nickel is that he stole from his employer. Yet there's been no indication he's willing to assist authorities in locating the money," the Judge said.

As a result of the government's investigation, approximately \$340,000.00 of the \$581,000.00 stolen from Kuukpik Corporation has been recovered, Assistant U.S. Attorney Deborah Smith said.

Nissani's wife, Golchehreh Tarkeshi, was also sentenced for conspiracy to commit interstate transportation of stolen money and interstate transportation of stolen money. She received a sentence of 18 months imprisonment.

In her signed plea agreement, Tarkeshi admitted that the money she placed in a Swiss bank account was money stolen from the

Kuukpik Corporation. She and her husband assigned their interest in the money to the government as partial restitution, Smith explained.

The indictment charged Nissani with stealing approximately \$581,000.00 from Kuukpik Corporation when he worked there as finance director in 1982 and 1983. In his signed plea agreement, Nissani admitted diverting money from the Kuukpik Corporation bank account in two ways: by intercepting endorsed checks deposited with the Kuukpik Corporation store and by issuing and cashing unauthorized Kuukpik Corporation checks.

Both defendants admitted that the cash Nissani collected was used to purchase cashier's checks from Anchorage banks. The cashier's checks were then mailed to three Canadian banks. The money was ultimately transferred to banks in Hawaii and Switzerland. Money located in the Swiss account has been recovered, Smith said.

"Nissani's ten year sentence indicates how seriously the Court views cases involving fraud against the Native corporations of Alaska," U.S. Attorney Spaan said. "Hopefully, the result in this case will serve to deter others from similar conduct in the future."

On December 13, 1985,

Nissani pled guilty before Judge Holland to one count of conspiracy to commit interstate transportation of stolen money; one count of interstate transportation of stolen money; one count

of mail fraud; and one count of failure to file a currency transaction report. Tarkeshi pled guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit interstate transportation of stolen money and one count of

interstate transportation of stolen money.

Following the sentencing, the remaining pending state and federal charges against Nissani were dismissed.