

Kuukpik employee indicted

The Anchorage Times

The financial director of a North Slope village corporation has been charged with stealing much of the organization's cash. And authorities fear he may have fled the state.

About \$800,000 is alleged to have been embezzled from the Kuukpik Corp., most of whose 220 shareholder-members are residents of Nuiqsut in the North Slope Borough, south-east of Barrow and just west

of Prudhoe Bay.

Mohammed Ali Nissani, 48, is being sought by state authorities on two charges of forgery and one of theft — all felonies. A warrant for his arrest has been issued with bail set at \$500,000.

Nissani reportedly fled after authorities traced some of the money to a bank account in Switzerland, said Fairbanks district attorney Harry Davis, to

(Continued on Page Eleven)

Kuukpik employee indicted

(Continued from Page One)

which officials have traced almost \$300,000 of the missing \$800,000.

Davis declined to discuss how state officials discovered the theft or the whereabouts of the money. He also declined to say where the rest of the money might be. Davis said that information would have to come out in court.

But the Fairbanks prosecutor also acknowledged that it is unlikely Nissani will show up for a scheduled Aug. 15 court appearance. More charges will be lodged against him at the time, Davis said.

FBI spokesman Bob Tober and U.S. Attorney Michael Spaan confirmed that they also are investigating Nissani, but they refused all other comment on the case.

Kuukpik Corp. president Joe Nukapigak said the corporation's prime concern is trying to recover the money.

When asked how much of the corporation's funds were taken, Nukapigak replied, "I can't comment on our assets until all this is resolved."

Nissani reportedly claims dual American and Iranian cit-

izenship. A Pakistani passport also has been issued to him.

"I fully expect that we will apprehend him," Davis said.

Nissani was first charged with theft early this year after he was accused of obtaining an extra \$3,600 paycheck — claiming it was a payroll advance. He was released on \$5,000 bail.

But as state investigators took a closer look at Nissani's financial dealings, they found, in Davis' words, "a substantial amount of embezzlement."

That information was brought to a state grand jury, which indicted Nissani. A federal grand jury also is considering evidence against Nissani.

But Nissani apparently became aware that authorities were on his trail when he learned that they had discovered the Swiss bank account.

And that is when he is thought to have fled the state.

Before going to work for Kuukpik about a year and a half ago, Nissani operated an export-import business based in Iran.