



NEWS RELEASE

Debra W. Yang
United States Attorney
Central District of California

For Immediate Distribution

March 5, 2004

Thom Mrozek, Public Affairs Officer
(213) 894-6947
thom.mrozek@usdoj.gov
www.usdoj.gov/usao/cac

ELABORATE FRAUD SCHEME LEADS TO ARREST IN LAS VEGAS OF DEFENDANT CHARGED WITH LOOTING BUSINESSES

A former Los Angeles resident who posed as an attorney and investment banker, gained the trust of small business owners and investors, and then looted their companies and misappropriated their investments was arrested yesterday afternoon in Las Vegas, United States Attorney Debra W. Yang announced today.

Daniel Nicherie, 44, of Brussels, Belgium, was arrested pursuant to a criminal complaint by special agents with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and IRS-Criminal Investigation. The complaint, which was filed on Wednesday and unsealed today, charges Nicherie with four counts of wire fraud, two counts of bankruptcy fraud and one count of pension fraud.

Nicherie allegedly defrauded a Los Angeles couple out of approximately \$40 million in cash, real property and businesses. Nicherie told the victims, Ami and Sarit Shafrir, that he could assist them with their business interests. Nicherie then took control of the Shafrirs' companies, drained the companies' assets and then put the companies into bankruptcy. Nicherie is also accused of seizing Sarit Shafrir's personal assets through a similarly elaborate scheme. Nicherie then took a series of steps, including the filing of more than 100 lawsuits, to prevent the Shafrirs from recovering their assets.

Nicherie is also charged with defrauding Ezra and Gil Mileikowsky of Los Angeles out of \$275,000 in cash. Nicherie made a series of misrepresentations that caused the Mileikowskys to invest in a purported business which allegedly sold excess

inventory over the Internet, as well as a purported venture capital fund. Nicherie lured the Milekowskys by falsely stating that they could expect a high rate of return on their investments and that prominent individuals, including Haim Saban, a television and film producer, and Shuki Levy, an Israeli entertainment figure, had invested with Nicherie.

A criminal complaint contains allegations that a defendant has committed a crime. Every defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

If convicted of the charges set forth in the complaint, Nicherie faces a maximum penalty of 35 years in federal prison.

Nicherie is expected to make his initial court appearance at 3:00 this afternoon in United States District Court in Las Vegas.

This case was investigated by the Department of Labor, the Internal Revenue Service, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

**CONTACT: Assistant United States Attorneys Steven Olson
(213) 894-6948**

**Assistant United States Attorney Douglas Fuchs
(213) 894-6531.**