

Fake Priest Convicted of Tax Fraud

Miami (Aug. 27, 2008)

A self-proclaimed priest has been convicted of tax fraud after his accountant and girlfriend pleaded guilty.

Earl R. Wolfe, 59, was convicted Aug. 21 on charges of conspiring to defraud the United States and six counts of filing a false tax return. He was remanded to the custody of the U.S. Marshals Service. Sentencing is scheduled for Oct. 18.

Wolfe's co-defendants - his girlfriend, Linda C. Edell, 60, and Fort Lauderdale CPA Lawrence W. Legel, 61 - pled guilty earlier this month. Sentencing for them is scheduled for Sept. 29.

From 1999 through 2004, Wolfe reported \$600 of income on his federal tax returns, but evidence at trial established that he earned more than \$750,000 as an unlicensed architect, according to the Justice Department. Wolfe attempted to conceal his income by cashing more than \$600,000 at a local check-cashing store using nominee entities. Evidence presented at trial showed that Wolfe had not paid any income taxes since 1989.

Wolfe also attempted to hide his assets from the IRS. In October 2003, falsely claiming to be a priest, he created the Office of the Presiding Overseer of the Domicile Creators Service Ministry, which purported to be a tax-exempt religious entity. Wolfe then transferred ownership of his personal residence and two Harley Davidson motorcycles to the so-called ministry.