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**THREE WOMEN PLEAD GUILTY IN MORTGAGE FRAUD SCHEME**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
 October 31, 2011  
 www.justice.gov/usao/nj

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CAMDEN, N.J. – A mother and daughter from New Jersey and a Las Vegas woman pleaded guilty mid-trial today to participating in a mortgage fraud scheme that caused mortgage lenders to release more than \$1.9 million in mortgage loans obtained by fraud, U.S. Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

Patricia Smith, 57, of Irvington, N.J., pleaded guilty to Counts Four and Five of the Superseding Indictment, which charged her with wire fraud. Smith's daughter, Jamilah Smith, 30, of Irvington, N.J., pleaded guilty to Counts Two and Three of the Superseding Indictment, which charged her with wire fraud. Carol Ashley, 57, of Las Vegas, NV, pleaded guilty to Counts Four and Five of the Superseding Indictment which charged her with wire fraud.

All three defendants entered their guilty pleas on the fifth day of trial which had started on October 24 before U.S. District Judge Jerome B. Simandle in Camden federal court.

According to documents filed in this case and statements made in court:

Patricia Smith and Jamilah Smith served as "straw buyers" to purchase two condominiums each in North Wildwood, N.J. The straw buyers had good credit scores, but lacked the financial resources to qualify for mortgage loans. The Smiths' accomplices created false documents, such as fake bank statements, W-2 Forms, and pay stubs to make the straw buyers appear more creditworthy than they actually were in order to induce the lenders to make the loans. Ashley falsely verified to the lenders that Patricia Smith worked for Ashley's company, Exclusive Entertainment Production, based in the Los Angeles area.

Once the loans were approved and the mortgage lenders sent the loan proceeds in connection with real estate closings on the properties, the defendants' accomplices took a portion of the proceeds from the fraudulent mortgage loans and ultimately paid the Smiths for their roles.

Each charge to which the defendants pleaded guilty carry a maximum potential penalty of 30 years in prison and a \$1 million fine. Patricia Smith agreed to forfeit \$82,716.80, and Jamilah Smith agreed to forfeit \$65,047.70, representing the amount of proceeds obtained as a result of the offenses. Sentencing for all three defendants is scheduled for March 2, 2012. A fourth defendant named in the Superseding Indictment Ollie Rudolph Thaxton, pleaded guilty to Count One, which charged him with wire fraud on Sept. 20, 2011, and is scheduled to be sentenced Jan. 12, 2012.

U.S. Attorney Fishman credited special agents from the FBI's Atlantic City Resident Agency, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Michael B. Ward in Newark, and special agents from IRS-Criminal Investigation in Newark, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Victor W. Lessoff, with the investigation leading to the trial and guilty pleas.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys R. Stephen Stigall of the U.S. Attorney's Office Criminal Division in Camden, and John E. Clabby of the U.S. Attorney's Office Criminal Division in Trenton.

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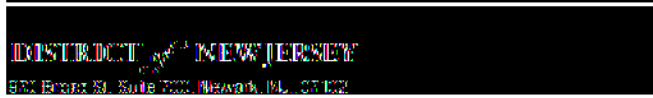
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Defense Counsel:

Patricia Smith: J. Michael Farrell Esq., Philadelphia  
Jamilah Smith: Dory M. Archie Esq., Camden  
Carol Ashby: Michael E. Billey Esq., Mount Holly, NJ

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