



# Department of Justice

## United States Attorney Jill Westmoreland Rose Western District of North Carolina

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2017  
<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/ncw>

CONTACT: Lia Bantavani  
704-338-3140  
[lia.bantavani@usdoj.gov](mailto:lia.bantavani@usdoj.gov)

### **CHARLOTTE JEWELER INDICTED ON FRAUD CHARGES IN CONNECTION WITH \$3.5 MILLION INVESTMENT SCHEME**

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – U.S. Attorney Jill Westmoreland Rose announced today that a Charlotte area jeweler has been indicted on fraud charges in connection with a \$3.5 million investment scheme involving jewelry, precious metals and gemstones. A federal grand jury returned the 18-count indictment against Benjamin Abraham, 59, on Tuesday, September 19, 2017, charging him with one count of wire fraud, and multiple counts of concealment money laundering and transactional money laundering. The indictment was unsealed today, following Abraham's initial appearance.

John A. Strong, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Charlotte Office and David M. McGinnis, Inspector in Charge of the Charlotte Division of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service join U.S. Attorney Rose in making today's announcement.

According to allegations contained in the indictment, Abraham operated a number of businesses engaged in the wholesale and retail sale of diamonds, precious metals and jewelry, including Benjamin Diamonds, LLC, Benjamin Jewelers, LLC, Global Trading LLC, G&I USA, LLC and other related entities. The indictment alleges that from at least December 2012 through at least May 2017, Abraham executed a financial fraud scheme involving investments in jewelry, precious metals and gemstones, among other things. During the course of the scheme, Abraham induced at least seven victim-investors to invest over \$3.5 million, resulting in losses of more than \$2 million. The indictment alleges that instead of investing the victims' money as promised, Abraham used it to fund his lifestyle, to keep his struggling businesses afloat, to pay pre-existing debts, and to make Ponzi-style payments to other victim-investors.

According to court records, to induce his victims to part with their money, Abraham made a number of fraudulent representations, including that the victims' money would be used for short-term investments in gold or other precious metals, to invest in diamonds and jewelry obtained from estates, and to buy other large diamonds which would be sold for profit. The indictment alleges that Abraham also lied to investors about his past successes and profits from engaging in such investments, misrepresented the security of the investments and made false representations about the rate of return and the duration of the investments. At times, Abraham also induced victims by falsely representing that he had unique access to estate sales due to his connections and that he would be also be investing his own money.

In order to continue the fraud scheme and to avoid detection, the indictment alleges that when victims asked about the status of their investments, Abraham gave numerous false explanations. He also provided victims with checks from accounts that Abraham knew did not have sufficient funds to cover the checks, and continued to lie when he was confronted about the dishonored checks.

According to allegations contained in the indictment, in or around early 2016, after a number of banks refused to maintain bank accounts over which Abraham had signatory authority, Abraham began using bank accounts not associated with his name. The indictment alleges that Abraham formed Global Trading LLC, and caused his wife and an employee to open several bank accounts in the name of that business. The charging document alleges that Abraham did not have signatory authority over the accounts but nevertheless caused financial transactions to be conducted in those accounts. The indictment also alleges that Abraham directed several financial transactions in one of those accounts to conceal information about the proceeds of the investment scheme, including the nature, ownership and source of the funds.

Abraham appeared today before U.S. Magistrate Judge David C. Keesler. The wire fraud count carries a maximum prison term of 20 years and a \$250,000 fine. The concealment money laundering charges carry a maximum prison term of 20 years and a fine of \$500,000 or twice the value of the property involved in the transaction, whichever is greater, per count. The transactional money laundering charges carry a maximum prison term of 10 years and a \$250,000 fine per count.

The details contained in this indictment are allegations. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

In making today's announcement U.S. Attorney Rose thanked USPIS and the FBI for their investigation which led to today's charges.

Assistant United States Attorneys Daniel Ryan and Dallas Kaplan, of the U.S. Attorney's Office in Charlotte, are in charge of the prosecution.

###