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Former PTO Employee Pleads Guilty in \$500,000 Embezzlement Scheme

(Alexandria, Va) - Karen L. Parish, age 39, of Woodbridge, Va., pleaded guilty yesterday evening to conspiracy to commit wire fraud in connection with an embezzlement scheme.

Dana J. Boente, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, and Todd Zinser, Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Commerce, made the announcement after the plea was accepted by United States District Judge T.S. Ellis, III. Parish faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison when she will be sentenced on Nov. 20, 2009. According to the terms of the plea agreement, she must also pay full restitution to the victim of her fraud.

According to a statement of facts filed with the plea, Parish was a financial analyst for the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. She managed an account to which PTO customers deposited funds that were to be used to pay expenses incurred in processing their patent and trademark applications. Parish transferred funds from this account to accounts controlled by co-conspirator Michael Reid. Parish fraudulently concealed the transfers by falsely making them look like refund payments to PTO customers. During the course of the conspiracy, Parish and Reid stole \$534,338.55 from the PTO. Reid previously pleaded guilty on August 10, 2009.

"This case underscores the importance of strong internal controls. It also emphasizes the significant need to stress integrity as a core value within the Federal workforce," said Inspector General Todd Zinser. "I would like to thank the U.S. Attorney's Office for prosecuting this case, and I would like to recognize new management at the Patent and Trademark Office of Financial Management for identifying and reporting financial irregularities, which eventually led to this conviction."

The case was investigated by the U.S. Department of Commerce Office of Inspector General. Assistant United States Attorney Edmund P. Power is prosecuting the case on behalf of the United States.

A copy of this press release may be found on the website of the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Virginia at <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/vae>. Related court documents and information may be found on the website of the District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia at <http://www.vaed.uscourts.gov> or on <http://pacer.uspci.uscourts.gov>.

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