Elaine M. Cacheris Sandra J. Harris James A. Howell Lisa A. Gok Janet R. Rich John C. Ricci Renee M. Lee David M. Bassham

Attorneys for Plaintiff Securities and Exchange Commission 5670 Wilshire Blvd., 11th Floor Los Angeles, CA 90036 Telephone: (213) 965-3998

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

WESTERN DIVISION

CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION,:

Plaintiff,

Civil Action No.

COMPLAINT FOR SECURITIES VIOLATIONS

WESTERN EXECUTIVE GROUP, INC., CASH SYSTEMS USA, INC., CHARLES R. RIETZ, ROBERT R. PARRISH, ROBERT J. STRUTH, and R. STEPHEN EDGEL,

Defendants.

18 19

20

21

22

23

24

25

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

15

16

17

Plaintiff Securities and Exchange Commission ("Commission"), alleges:

SUMMARY

1. This is an action for fraud in the offer and sale of unregistered securities by Western Executive Group, Inc. ("WEG"), Cash Systems USA, Inc. ("Cash Systems"), Charles R. Rietz ("Rietz"), Robert R. Parrish ("Parrish"), Robert J. Struth ("Struth"), and R. Stephen Edgel ("Edgel") (collectively referred to herein as the "Defendants"). Defendants have raised over

\$3.49 million from at least 132 investors nationwide through the sale and leaseback of automated teller machines ("ATMs"). Defendants have misrepresented and continue to misrepresent the source of investor returns, the profitability of the ATMs leased by Cash Systems from WEG investors, the number of ATMs currently installed and operating, the safety of the investment, and the outstanding court judgments and administrative orders against Rietz and Struth. The Commission seeks relief for Defendants' violations of Sections 5(a), 5(c) and 17(a) of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended (the "Securities Act") [15 U.S.C. §§ 77e(a), 77e(c) and 77q(a)] and Section 10(b) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 (the "Exchange Act") [15 U.S.C. § 78j(b)] and Rule 10b-5 thereunder [17 C.F.R. § 240.10b-5], and for Parrish, Struth and Edgel's violations of Section 15(a)(1) of the Exchange Act [15 U.S.C. § 780(a)(1)]. Specifically, the Commission requests that this Court enjoin Defendants from any further violations of the securities laws, order Defendants to disgorge all benefits obtained by virtue of their illegal conduct, together with prejudgment interest, and order Defendants to pay civil penalties.

JURISDICTION

2. This Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to Section 22(a) of the Securities Act of 1933 [15 U.S.C. § 77v(a)] and Sections 21(e) and 27 of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 [15 U.S.C. §§ 78u(e) and 78aa]. Defendants WEG, Cash Systems, Rietz, Parrish, Struth and Edgel have, directly or indirectly, made use of the means or instrumentalities of interstate commerce and/or of the mails in

- 2 -

28

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

connection with the securities transactions described in this Complaint.

THE DEFENDANTS

- 3. Western Executive Group, Inc. ("WEG"), a Nevada corporation headquartered in Reno, Nevada, offers and sells the securities at issue in this action on a national basis, including offers and sales in this judicial district. WEG is owned by Rietz, Parrish, Struth, Edgel and a group of approximately 10 passive shareholders.
- 4. <u>Cash Systems USA, Inc.</u> ("Cash Systems"), a Nevada corporation headquartered in Reno, Nevada, was incorporated in August 1995. Cash Systems is owned by Rietz, Parrish, Struth and Edgel. It has the same officers as WEG. Its principal business is leasing ATMs from WEG investors.
- 5. WEG and Cash Systems are each the agent and alter ego of the other. The separate corporate status of WEG and Cash Systems should be disregarded.
- 6. Charles R. Rietz ("Rietz") is the president, chief executive officer and 35% owner of WEG and Cash Systems. He presently resides in Mesa, Arizona. In June 1978, Rietz consented to the entry of an order by this Court permanently enjoining him from future violations of the securities registration and antifraud provisions of the securities laws.

 See SEC v. NAVSAT Systems, Inc., et al., Civil Action No. C-77-4683 RF (C.D. Cal. 1977) (the "Commission's NAVSAT action"). In September 1982, Rietz consented to an order of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission requiring him to, among other things:

 (1) cease and desist from future violations of the Commodity

Exchange Act; (2) pay a civil penalty of \$12,500; and (3) not be associated in any capacity with any firm that handles or operates commodity trading accounts for three years from the date of the order. See In the Matter of Western Financial Management, et al., CFTC Docket No. 81-18, (the "CFTC cease and desist order"). On May 6, 1991, the State of California ordered Rietz to desist and refrain from acting as an unregistered broker-dealer (the "California desist and refrain order"). Also in 1991, Rietz consented to an order of the Arizona Corporation Commission to, among other things, cease and desist from the offer and sale of unregistered, non-exempt securities and to pay an administrative penalty of \$16,000. See In the Matter of the Offering of Securities By Westech Lease Corporation, dba Western Executive Group, et al., Docket No. S-2474-I (the "Arizona cease and desist order").

- 7. Robert R. Parrish ("Parrish") is the Executive Vice President of WEG and Cash Systems, and supervises all of WEG's sales agents. Parrish owns 18% of WEG and is also an owner of Cash Systems. Parrish is not registered with the Commission as a broker or dealer.
- 8. Robert J. Struth ("Struth") resides in Southern California. Struth is the Vice President of Marketing of WEG and owns 10% of WEG. In addition, Struth is a Vice President and owner of Cash Systems. In June 1978, Struth consented to the entry of an order permanently enjoining him from violations of the securities registration and antifraud provisions of the securities laws in the Commission's NAVSAT action, supra at para.

28 / / /

- 6). Struth is not registered with the Commission as a broker or dealer.
- 9. R. Stephen Edgel ("Edgel") resides in Carmichael,
 California. He is a Vice President and 10% owner of WEG. He is
 also a Vice President and owner of Cash Systems. Edgel is not
 registered with the Commission as a broker or dealer.

RELATED ENTITY

10. Save-U-Systems, Inc. ("Save-U-Systems) is a Florida corporation headquartered in Leesburg, Florida. It is the operating joint venture partner of Cash Systems. Save-U-Systems is responsible for obtaining locations for, installing, operating and managing all ATMs leased by WEG and Cash Systems from investors. Save-U-Systems also sells ATMs to WEG that WEG resells to its investors.

GENERAL ALLEGATIONS

The Security

- 11. In at least September 1995, Defendants began offering and selling investments involving the sale and leaseback of privately owned ATMs. These privately owned ATMs are not affiliated with banks. The ATMs are placed in public locations such as shopping malls, airports and convenience stores. The ATMs generate revenue based on fees charged to customers who use them. This offering is ongoing and is being promoted over the Internet. Through June 1996, the Defendants raised over \$3.49 million from 132 investors nationwide.
- 12. The security offered and sold by Defendants consists of the following: For an investment of \$23,950, an investor can "purchase" an ATM from WEG. WEG's Purchase Agreement/Bill of

Sale states that this purchase price includes: (1) one Triton Model 9500 ATM; (2) an operating software package; (3) shipping and handling; (4) an optional installation package; and (5) an optional location assignment. Simultaneous to the "purchase" of the ATM, the investor leases the ATM back to Cash Systems. The ATM Equipment Lease Agreement ("Lease Agreement") states that Cash Systems will lease the ATM back from the investor for 60 months. During that time, Cash Systems will install, service, operate, and manage the ATM for the investor. In exchange for the leased interest in the ATM, Cash Systems agrees to pay the investor \$600.38 per month for the term of the lease.

- 13. In their offering documents, Defendants highlight the "fixed, high monthly income" of the ATM investment program that leads to "17.4% APR Base Rent plus Bonus Rent up to 40% APR total and more."
- 14. The offering documents also state that Cash Systems and Save-U-Systems are responsible for site location and leasing, installation, marketing and promotion of each ATM leased from investors. In return for these services, Cash Systems receives 70% of all revenue generated by the ATMs in excess of lease payments and other expenses, and Save-U-Systems receives 30%.
- 15. Since March of 1996, all revenue generated by the ATMs operated by Cash Systems has been deposited into a single pooled account at Palm Desert National Bank.
- 16. The Lease Agreement states that at all times during the term of the lease, the ATM is "under the sole and absolute control" of Cash Systems.

28 / / /

- 17. Even though the offering documents state that leasing the ATM back to Cash Systems is "optional," Defendants encourage investors to lease their ATMs to Cash Systems.
- 18. To date, all investors who have purchased ATMs from WEG have leased them back to Cash Systems.
- 19. Defendants offer to sell and have sold partial interests in ATMs to investors.
- 20. Defendants offer to sell and have sold at least one ATM under an alternative arrangement in which the investor splits the profit with Cash Systems and receives 50% of the revenue generated by the ATM as a lease payment.
- 21. As an additional incentive to purchase the security, Defendants promise investors who purchase and lease back more than one ATM a "multiple-unit purchase percentage rent bonus." Specifically, investors who purchase and lease back two ATMs are promised, in addition to their monthly lease payments, a "bonus" of 3% of the gross revenues in excess of \$2,000 per month from each ATM purchased. Investors who purchase and lease back three or four ATMs are promised a "bonus" of 5% of the gross revenues in excess of \$2,000 per month from each ATM purchased. The "bonus" for investors who purchase five or more ATMs is negotiable.
- of the lease term, all investors may renew the lease for a percentage-only lease payment of 5% of all gross income over \$1,000 per month for 60 months or sell the ATM to Cash Systems for the lesser of 10% of its residual value (\$2,395) or fair

market value based on a formula based on the actual revenue history for the ATM.

The Offer and Sale of the Security

- 23. Defendants solicit prospective investors for the ATM investment program on a nationwide basis, and have solicited investors in this judicial district. The ATM investment program is offered to the public through a general solicitation, including presentations at private investment seminars and conventions, mass mailings, and over the Internet.
- 24. Defendants offer and sell the ATM investment program through at least 16 sales agents located throughout the country who are supervised by Parrish.
- 25. Defendants Rietz, Parrish, Edgel and Struth have each actively and substantially participated in the offer and sale of these securities.

The Use of Investor Funds

- 26. From September 1995 through June 1996, WEG received at least \$3.49 million from investors. WEG used these funds as follows:
 - a. at least \$1.37 million was transferred to Save-U-Systems;
 - at least \$690,000 was paid to WEG sales agents as commission;
 - c. at least \$78,900 was withdrawn as cash;
 - d. at least \$522,100 was used for undetermined purposes;
 - e. at least \$240,000 was transferred to other WEG bank accounts;

28 /

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25



- f. at least \$164,000 was used to pay monthly lease payments to investors;
- g. at least \$150,000 was transferred to Rietz, Parrish, Struth and Edgel;
- h. at least \$80,000 was transferred to the account of a WEG-related company.

Material Misrepresentations and Omissions of Material Facts Regarding the ATM Investment Program

27. Defendants misrepresent and fail to disclose the following material facts to investors in connection with the offer and sale of the ATM investment program: (1) that lease payments come from new investor money paid to WEG; (2) the profitability of the ATMs leased by Cash Systems from WEG investors; (3) the number of ATMs currently installed and operating; (4) the safety of the investment; and (5) the prior disciplinary histories of Rietz and Struth.

Defendants Fail to Disclose That Lease Payments Come From New Investor Money Paid to WEG

- 28. According to the Lease Agreement, Cash Systems is required to make lease payments on the 1st or 15th of the month 60 days after the investor returns his or her completed agreements and the cash investment to WEG. Cash Systems pays lease payments whether or not the investor's ATM is installed and operating.
- 29. A document provided to investors by Cash Systems' disbursing agent states that investors' lease payments "will come solely from the net ATM transaction fees . . . and/or from

supplemental deposits, if any, made by Cash Systems for the credit of specific ATM accounts."

- 30. Defendants fail to disclose to investors that the "supplemental deposits" from Cash Systems actually come from new investor money paid to WEG.
- 31. Rietz and Parrish knew, at all relevant times, that the money transferred to Cash Systems to pay investors came from WEG.
- 32. Defendants further failed to disclose to investors that the ATMs they operate for investors have never generated sufficient revenue to cover the lease payments owed to investors.
- 33. Rietz and Parrish both knew, at all relevant times, that the ATMs leased by Cash Systems from WEG investors were not generating enough revenue to make lease payments to investors.
- 34. Defendants knew, at all relevant times, that Cash
 Systems made lease payments to investors even if Cash Systems had
 not installed or made operational the investor's ATM.

Defendants Misrepresent the Profitability of the ATMs Leased by Cash Systems From WEG Investors

- 35. The offering documents state that the ATM program has "income production proven on over 70 ATMs operating." Defendants also distributed fliers to investors stating that Cash Systems' average monthly gross revenue is \$3,200 per ATM and its average monthly net revenue is \$2,540 per ATM. WEG also states that the lowest revenue experience on any operating ATM has been approximately \$1,500 per month.
- 36. Contrary to Defendants' representations to investors, only 42 ATMs were operating and generating revenue as of July 1996. Of those 42 ATMs, only two ATMs generate enough revenue to

cover the expenses and lease payments associated with each such ATM. Further, only two other ATMs currently operating generate enough revenue to cover lease payments <u>before</u> the payment of expenses.

- 37. Contrary to Defendants' representations to investors, the average gross monthly revenue per ATM operating in July 1996 and August 1996 was only approximately \$450-850 per ATM.
 - 38. Rietz and Parrish knew, at all relevant times, that the ATMs operating by Cash Systems did not generate enough revenue to cover lease payments owed to investors.

Defendants Misrepresent the Number of ATMs Currently Installed and Operating

- 39. Defendants have misrepresented to investors the number of ATMs that are installed and operating. In October of 1995, Cash Systems told investors that it had 63 ATMs installed. In addition, the offering documents state revenue projections are "based on revenue experience from over 70 units in operation." And, in a April 1996 letter, Rietz told investors "[w]e are pleased to report that the installation of the machines is proceeding well."
- 40. Rietz, Parrish and Edgel knew, at all relevant times, that significantly fewer ATMs were actually installed and operating than were represented to investors to be installed and operating.

Defendants Misrepresent the Safety of the Program

41. The offering documents highlight the safety of the ATM investment program. In a document provided to investors titled "Five Major Reasons to Seriously Consider our ATM



Purchase/Leaseback," the Defendants list "safety" as one of the major reasons to invest in the ATM investment program.

- 42. The offering documents further state "not only are your lease payments secured by your equipment, but by the total average revenue of all ATMs leased and operated by Cash Systems."
- 43. Defendants knew at all relevant times that the total average revenue for all ATMs leased and operated by Cash Systems provided no security to investors because the total average revenue for all ATMs leased and operated by Cash Systems was significantly less than the current lease payments.

Defendants Fail to Disclose the Prior Disciplinary Histories of Rietz and Struth

- 44. The offering documents state that Rietz's "business career spans thirty years as an entrepreneur engaged primarily in investment banking, financial and tax planning, insurance, retailing, real estate and marketing investment securities." The offering documents further state that Rietz has been licensed to sell commodities, securities, insurance and real estate, and that he is "active in church and community affairs." The offering documents also state that Struth "has over thirty-five years of business experience as an entrepreneur, in product marketing, and as a financial executive," and that he is or has been licensed to sell insurance, securities and real estate.
- A5. The offering documents do not disclose that in 1978 Rietz and Struth both consented to the entry of orders permanently enjoining them from future violations of the securities registration and antifraud provisions of the securities laws in the Commission's NAVSAT action. See SEC v.

NAVSAT Systems, Inc., et al., Civil Action No. C-77-4683 RF (C.D. Cal. 1977)

46. The offering documents also fail to disclose the previously described CFTC cease and desist order, see In the Matter of Western Financial Management, et al., dated September 16, 1982, issued by the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, the California desist and refrain order, and the Arizona cease and desist order involving Rietz, see In the Matter of the Offering of Securities By Westech Lease Corporation, dba Western Executive Group, et al., dated September 5, 1991, issued by the Arizona Corporation Commission.

FIRST CLAIM

FRAUD IN THE OFFER OR SALE OF SECURITIES

Section 17(a) of the

Securities Act of 1933 [15 U.S.C. § 77q(a)]

(Against All Defendants)

- 47. Paragraphs 3 through 46 of this Complaint are realleged and incorporated herein by reference.
- 48. Defendants, and each of them, by engaging in the conduct described in Paragraphs 3 through 46 above, directly or indirectly, in the offer or sale of securities, by the use of means or instruments of transportation or communication in interstate commerce or by the use of the mails:
 - a. with scienter, employed devices, schemes or artifices to defraud;
 - b. obtained money or property by means of untrue statements of material fact or by omitting to state material facts necessary in order to make

9

11

12

15

16 17

18

20

21

19

22

24

25

27

the statements made, in the light of the circumstances under which they were made, not misleading; or

- c. engaged in transactions, practices or courses of business which operated or would operate as a fraud or deceit upon the purchasers of such securities.
- 49. By reason of the foregoing, Defendants, and each of them violated, and unless restrained and enjoined will continue to violate, Section 17(a) of the Securities Act of 1933 [15 U.S.C. § 77g(a)].

SECOND CLAIM

FRAUD IN CONNECTION WITH THE

PURCHASE OR SALE OF SECURITIES

Section 10(b) of the Securities Exchange

Act of 1934 [15 U.S.C. § 78j(b)] & Rule 10b-5

thereunder [17 C.F.R. § 240.10b-5]

(Against All Defendants)

- 50. Paragraphs 3 through 46 of this Complaint are realleged and incorporated herein by reference.
- 51. Defendants, and each of them, by engaging in the conduct described in Paragraphs 3 through 46, directly or indirectly, in connection with the purchase or sale of securities, by the use of means or instrumentalities of interstate commerce, or of the mails, or of a facility of a national securities exchange, with scienter:
 - a. employed devices, schemes or artifices to defraud;

10

11

12

15

19

22

25

- 27

- made untrue statements of material facts or b. omitted to state material facts necessary in order to make the statements made, in the light of the circumstances under which they were made, not misleading; or
- engaged in acts, practices or courses of business c. which operated or would operate as a fraud or deceit upon other persons.
- By reason of the foregoing, Defendants, and each of 52. them violated, and unless restrained and enjoined will continue to violate, Section 10(b) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 [15 U.S.C. § 78j(b)] and Rule 10b-5 thereunder [17 C.F.R. § 240.10b-5].

THIRD CLAIM

OFFER AND SALE OF UNREGISTERED SECURITIES Sections 5(a) and 5(c) of the Securities Act of 1933 [15 U.S.C. §§ 77e(a) and 77e(c)]

(Against All Defendants)

- The allegations contained in paragraphs 3 through 46 of 53. this Complaint are realleged and incorporated by reference.
- Defendants, and each of them, from September of 1995 through the present, by engaging in the conduct described in paragraphs 3 through 46 above, directly or indirectly, through use of the means or instruments of transportation or communication in interstate commerce or the mails, offered to sell or sold securities in the form of investment contracts described to investors as sale and lease-back agreements, or, directly or indirectly, carried or caused such securities to be

carried through the mails or in interstate commerce, for the purpose of sale or delivery after sale.

- 55. No registration statement has been filed with the Commission or has been in effect with respect to these securities.
- 56. By reason of the foregoing, Defendants, and each of them, violated, and unless restrained and enjoined will continue to violate Sections 5(a) and 5(c) of the Securities Act of 1933 [15 U.S.C. §§ 77e(a) and 77e(c)].

FOURTH CLAIM

VIOLATIONS OF THE BROKER-DEALER REGISTRATION PROVISIONS
Section 15(a)(1) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934

[15 U.S.C. §§ 780(a)(1)]

(Against Parrish, Struth and Edgel)

- 57. The allegations contained in paragraphs 3 through 46 of this Complaint are realleged and incorporated by reference.
- 58. Defendants Parrish, Struth and Edgel, and each of them, from September of 1995 through the present, by engaging in the conduct described in paragraphs 3 through 46 above, directly or indirectly, made use of the mails or means or instrumentalities of interstate commerce to effect transactions in securities, without being registered as brokers or dealers in accordance with Section 15(b) of the Exchange Act [15 U.S.C. § 780(b)], in violation of Section 15(a)(1) of the Exchange Act [15 U.S.C. § 780(b)].
- 59. By reason of the foregoing, Defendants Parrish, Struth, and Edgel, and each of them, violated, and unless restrained and

28 / / /

enjoined will continue to violate, Section 15(a)(1) of the Exchange Act [15 U.S.C. § 780(a)(1)].

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, the Commission respectfully requests that this Court:

I.

Issue findings of fact and conclusions of law that Defendants, and each of them, committed the violations charged and alleged herein.

II.

Preliminarily and permanently enjoin Defendants, and each of them, from violating Sections 5(a), 5(c) and 17(a) of the Securities Act and Section 10(b) of the Exchange Act and Rule 10b-5 thereunder.

III.

Preliminarily and permanently enjoin Defendants Parrish, Struth, and Edgel, from violating Sections 15(a)(1) of the Exchange Act.

IV.

Issue a temporary restraining order:

- A. enjoining Defendants, and each of them, from:
- 1. transferring, changing, wasting, dissipating, converting, concealing or otherwise disposing of, in any manner, any funds, assets, claims, or other property or assets owned or controlled by, or in the possession or custody of them or their subsidiaries, successors and affiliates;

27 / / /

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

28 / / /

- transferring, assigning, selling, hypothecating, or otherwise disposing of any notes, investment contracts, or other securities held by them;
- 3. destroying, mutilating, concealing, transferring, altering, or otherwise disposing of, in any manner, any books, records, computer programs, computer files, computer print outs, correspondence, memoranda, brochures, or any other documents of any kind, pertaining in any manner to any transactions in the securities of any company, including, without limitation, transactions involving the offer and sale of ATMs, or to any communications between any of them;
- B. placing an immediate freeze on all accounts at any bank, financial institution or brokerage firm, all certificates of deposit, or other funds, assets or securities, held in the name of, or for the benefit of, WEG or Cash Systems.

v.

Order Defendants, and each of them, to disgorge all benefits gained and losses avoided as a result of their illegal conduct and to pay prejudgment interest thereon.

VI.

Order Defendants, and each of them, to pay civil penalties pursuant to Section 20(d)(1) of the Securities Act [15 U.S.C. § 77t(d)(1)] and Section 21(d)(3) of the Exchange Act [15 U.S.C. § 78u(d)(3)].

VII:

Retain jurisdiction of this action in accordance with the principles of equity and the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure in order to implement and carry out the terms of all orders and

28

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

decrees that may be entered, or to entertain any suitable application or motion for additional relief within the jurisdiction of this Court. VIII. Grant such other and further relief as this Court may determine to be just and necessary.

October 2, 1996

David M. Bassham

Attorney for Plaintiff Securities and Exchange Commission