

Va. indicts trade school owner

By Melody Simmons
Evening Sun Staff

NTS operates 2 locations in Md.

The owner and president of the National Training Systems Inc., which operates trade schools in Glen Burnie and Laurel and in Richmond, Va., has been indicted in Virginia on 46 counts of grand theft stemming from the NTS truck-driving school in Richmond.

Charles R. Longo, 46, was arrested Tuesday and was ordered held without bond yesterday by Prince George's County District Court Judge Sherrie Krauser. He was in the Prince George's County Detention Center,

awaiting extradition to Richmond, said David Eberhart, a Virginia prosecutor.

The charges of grand theft carry penalties of up to 920 years in prison.

Leonard L. Lucchi, Longo's attorney, yesterday refused to comment on the indictment. He said Longo, who owns a house in Annapolis and rents an apartment in Laurel, told him he was confused about the charges.

Longo and NTS have also been under

scrutiny by the Maryland Higher Education Commission, which in August ordered Longo to remove himself as manager of the Glen Burnie and Laurel schools and to refund tuition payments to students who dropped out of NTS before graduating.

The state charged that Longo has falsified student records to avoid paying the refunds, a practice Longo denied.

The Virginia indictment stems from charges that Longo — through an NTS "satellite" campus in Richmond — has embezzled about \$138,000 in student tuition fees, destroyed student records and funneled state and federal loan money to start a new shipping business in Laurel called Shippers Choice, Eberhart said.

An NTS maintenance employee yesterday answered the NTS Laurel telephone as "NTS/Shippers Choice."

NTS of Virginia also added a computer curriculum which was not approved for loan funds from the state and enrolled computer students as truck driving students so the:

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Trade school owner indicted

INDICT, From C1
would qualify for financial aid, Eberhart said.

Virginia officials seized nine trucks belonging to Shippers Choice last week, the prosecutor added.

"We have had millions of complaints from NTS students. Ad nauseam. Ad infinitum," Eberhart said. "Longo knew he could not train these students and then caused the valid checks. We believe a majority of the loan funds have ended up in Shippers Choice. He's now out of the education business and into the shipping business."

The Maryland NTS each year enrolls about 4,000 students who pay for courses with state loans and grants.

The Maryland Higher Education Commission charged last summer that NTS did not refund at least 200 state students who attended trade courses not approved by the state or did not complete courses and were due refunds. Higher Education Secretary Shailla Aery ordered NTS to post a bond as insurance that students would be able to complete their education at another trade school if NTS went out of business.

An administrative hearing was held on that order in September, no decision has been reached, a commission spokesman said.

Longo got off scott free on these charges

and had the records expunged

Interesting, that the Sapperstein's have had numerous charges dropped against them over the years, Only two of the 107 gambling related charges against Gilbert were ever prosecuted.

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FRIDAY

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Md. board faults trade school

NTS in Glen Burnie said to ignore rules

By Patricia Meisol

Jackie Moyner and Leigh Ann Hohman, best friends from Glen Burnie, didn't bat an eyelash when movers carted away the soda machines at their new school Monday.

But when the school didn't give them books by Tuesday, they began to suspect the worst.

Less than 24 hours after enrolling in a \$4,195 computer course at the National Training Systems Inc. campus in Glen Burnie, the women say they learned from the president that the school's campus is closing. When they asked for their money back, the president instead urged them to sign up for his correspondence school.

Ms. Moyner, 22, and Ms. Hohman, 20, say they are out at least \$500 — the 10 percent the school gets to keep from their federal student loan because they showed up for two days. The school shouldn't haven't enrolled them if it was about to close, the women say, and they are angry.

So is the Maryland Higher Education Commission.

According to documents obtained yesterday by *The Sun*, the state believes NTS has been falsifying student records to avoid paying tuition refunds due those who dropped out and graduating secretaries and computer operators who can type only half as fast as the 55-words-a-minute requirement. And former NTS employees have told the state that the school shut down its computer to limit information to inspectors who came to visit last month.

The charges are contained in a 25-page complaint that says NTS engaged in a "systematic" pattern of unethical recruiting practices, including giving prospective students false information about average entry-level salaries for tractor-trailer jobs.

The commission also says the school's president and owner, Charles R. Longo, has been lying to them.

For the school to hold onto its license, the state says Mr. Longo must remove himself as manager of the school. The state also wants the school to refund tuition and rescind its certificates of completion to students in correspondence and on-site computer courses who were improperly admitted or graduated.

Yesterday Mr. Longo denied the latest charges against him and his school, one of the largest for-profit trade schools in Maryland. He said NTS would appeal the charges before an administrative law judge.

"That's not true. What can I say?" he asked. "It is very difficult to respond to the allegations because what happens is it requires a tremendous amount of detail."

He called the charge of turning off

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Md. board levies charges against NTS trade school

SCHOOL, from 1C

computers to deny access to the records "ridiculous" and denied falsifying records. "There are 2.45 million records on our computers and in order for us to change those, you have to do that by hand and spend days and days and days and days," he said.

The charges come less than a month after the state charged NTS with failing to make refunds to at least 200 students who either dropped out or who were enrolled in a program the state said it did not approve.

Maryland Higher Education Secretary Shaila R. Aery also ordered the school to post a bond to ensure that students would have the money to finish their education elsewhere should the school go out of business. NTS is appealing that order, and a hearing is scheduled Sept. 11.

NTS operated computer technology training courses at locations in Glen Burnie and Baltimore until this week. Baltimore students now enrolled are being allowed to finish their course, but no new students are being enrolled, Mr. Longo said. He said NTS continues to offer a combination correspondence and on-site tractor-trailer training course from its headquarters in Laurel. He said he gave the Glen Burnie students a choice of enrolling in other courses at his school or going to the

NTS enrolls 3,000 to 4,000 students every year and collects millions in state loans and grants annually.

Laurel campus to get a full tuition refund.

NTS enrolls 3,000 to 4,000 students every year and collects millions in state loans and grants annually. It earned more tuition from federally backed student loans in Maryland in 1989 than the University of Maryland in College Park, flagship of the state university system.

State officials said the series of charges against the school amount to a "flagrant disregard" for state rules and regulations designed to protect students who enroll in for-profit trade schools.

The state said student records at the three schools were "misleading, incomplete, and in some instances difficult to obtain." In one instance, state inspectors reviewed 27 student files at the Glen Burnie campus and found only three students who had learned to type at the required pace of 55 words a minute, the state said.

NTS trade school shuts down, files for bankruptcy

U.S. had acted to restrict funds over irregularities

By Patricia Meisol

The state's largest for-profit trade school has gone belly up, leaving at least 2,000 students stranded and the U.S. Department of Education facing a potential bill of \$7.8 million.

National Training Systems Inc. filed for protection from creditors under federal bankruptcy laws last week after closing its truck driving and office-computer technology training schools in Baltimore, Glen Burnie and Laurel.

NTS had been the subject of complaints by students and the target of state charges that it offered unapproved courses and violated other rules.

The school has enrolled tens of thousands of students in its combination study-by-mail and residential courses in truck driving and diesel mechanics during the last two decades, and branched out into computer and office technology in the 1980s. Last year it was the single largest borrower of federally guaranteed loans after the University of Maryland at Baltimore, but many students dropped out and defaulted on their federal loans.

NTS had a default rate of 51.2 percent in 1987 and 28.7 percent in 1988.

In June, the U.S. Department of Education notified NTS that it would withhold tuition money from the school until after students graduated and the school documented that it had followed the rules. Usually, schools get tuition money up front for training students.

NTS President Charles R. Longo did not return a phone message yesterday. Alan Grochal, the attorney handling the NTS bankruptcy, said the school's cash-flow was severely restricted by the federal government's decision three months ago to withhold money from the school.

The company listed \$8.6 million in liabilities and \$885,000 in assets, in bankruptcy papers filed Sept. 21. Like many profit-making trade schools, NTS depended heavily on federal money for its income.

By law, the school must refund the full tuition to students who were enrolled when it closed or help them complete their education in another school.

Maryland Higher Education Secretary Shalla R. Aery said yesterday that her office would help place students in other schools and refund tuition from a new fund set up for that purpose with contributions from trade school owners this year. Tuition ranged from \$3,000 to \$5,000.

State officials said that as many as 2,000 students were enrolled in NTS, many of them