



# Department of Justice

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Southern District of Georgia

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## **THREE DEFENDANTS PLEAD GUILTY FOR THEIR ROLES IN \$6.5 MILLION MEDICARE FRAUD SCHEME**

*Home, Yacht and \$1.3 million forfeited as part of pleas*

**SAVANNAH, GA** – Alfredo Rasco, 51, and Niurka Rasco, 49, both from Miami, Florida, and Iris Oswald, 54, from St. Simons Island, Georgia, pleaded guilty earlier this week before United States District Court Judge William T. Moore, Jr. for their roles in a scheme to defraud Medicare of \$6.5 million. Seconds before the scheduled start of the government’s evidence in the trial, the defendants pled guilty.

United States Attorney Edward J. Tarver stated, “Health care fraud is one of our most urgent and widespread national challenges. Offenders who steal from Medicare will be caught, sentenced to long prison sentences and their ill gotten gains will be forfeited. The United States Attorney’s Office is committed to strengthening the Medicare program through the vigorous prosecution of those who defraud the American people.”

Evidence during the guilty pleas showed that from December of 2005 through March of 2008, Alfredo Rasco, Niurka Rasco, Iris Oswald and others operated United Therapy, a phony medical clinic located in downtown Savannah. The defendants and others lured Medicare beneficiaries to United Therapy with free food, transportation and gift cards. Many of the Medicare beneficiaries targeted by the scheme were afflicted with HIV or AIDS and lived in local homeless shelters and Section VIII housing. Once at United Therapy, the Defendants used the patients’ Medicare information to submit \$6.5 million worth of phony bills to Medicare for infusion services that were not provided to those patients. Before law enforcement put a stop to this fraud, the defendants stole over \$4 million from Medicare.

For his role in the scheme, Alfredo Rasco faces a maximum statutory penalty of up to twelve years in prison, fines up to \$500,000 and three years of supervised release. Niurka Rasco faces a maximum statutory penalty of up to six months in prison, a fine up to \$2,000 and one year of supervised release. The Rascos also forfeited proceeds of the scheme, including \$1.3 million seized from their bank accounts and a 42' powerboat they named “Thank You, God.” For her role in the scheme, Iris Oswald faces a maximum statutory penalty of five years in

prison, a fine up to \$250,000 and three years of supervised release. Ms. Oswald also agreed to forfeit a home she purchased on St. Simons Island with proceeds of the fraud scheme.

All three defendants remain on bond pending sentence, which will be held upon the completion of a pre-sentence investigation and report.

Mr. Tarver praised the hard work and dedication of Special Agents Tony Alig and Josh Hayes of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, along with Special Agent David Graupner of the Office of Inspector General for HHS, who lead the investigation of this case. Tarver noted that the indictment against these defendants arose out of Operation Redex Infuscam, a major investigation led by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Office of Health and Human Services (HHS) into fraudulent infusion billings to Medicare in and around the Southern District of Georgia. Tarver also recognized the extensive efforts provided by investigator Kim Reinken and auditor Karen Hartley of the United States Attorney's Office for their contributions to a successful prosecution.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Brian T. Rafferty and James D. Durham.