United States Attorney's Office
Eastern District of Michigan

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PRESS RELEASE

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YPSILANTI STORE OPERATORS SENTENCED FOR FRAUD

United States Attorney Barbara L. McQuade announced today that four men who owned and operated the **Abbas Phone Card and Grocery** store at 2279 Ellsworth Road in Ypsilanti were sentenced yesterday by the Honorable Avern Cohn pursuant to their guilty pleas to conspiring to commit federal crimes and to defraud the United States, and to committing food stamp and WIC fraud. All four men live in Ann Arbor. They are:

- **AIDARUS ABBAS MOHAMED**, 54, the owner of the store, the authorized signatory on the store's bank account, and the applicant for federal food stamp and WIC benefits; and his brother. He was sentenced to serve 18 months in the custody of the Bureau of Prisons, followed by 2 years of supervised release, and to pay restitution of $718,743 to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

- **MOHAMED MOHAMED-ABAS SHEIKH**, 46, the manager of the store, was sentenced to serve 30 months in the custody of the Bureau of Prisons, followed by 2 years of supervised release, and to pay restitution of $718,743 to the USDA.

- **AHMED MOHAMED ABAS**, 23, and **ABDURAHMAN MOHAMED ABAS**, 20, the sons of Mohamed Mohamed-Abas Sheikh who worked in the store regularly with their father and conducted fraudulent food stamp and WIC transactions, were each sentenced to serve 2 years probation, a $1,000 fine, and ordered to pay restitution of $439, 809 to the USDA.

McQuade was joined in the announcement by Andrew G. Arena, FBI Special Agent in Charge, and Special Agent in Charge Joe N. Smith, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Inspector General.

According to the information obtained during the defendants' guilty plea hearings, between January 2005 and April 8, 2009, the four men fraudulently obtained over **$718,743** by redeeming food stamp and WIC benefits for cash, phone cards, carpets, knives, and other non-food and ineligible items. The men took a substantial commission for themselves in cash. The men also sent some of the money to unknown recipients located in the Horn of Africa, Europe, the Persian Gulf and West Africa, through their operation of an unlicensed money remitting business.

The case was investigated by special agents of the FBI and USDA-OIG. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Cynthia Oberg and Julia Caroff.