

NEWS

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Former Owner of Direct Mail Company Admits
Defrauding Postal Service and Customers

(More)

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NEWARK – The former owner of a Clifton company that prepared mailings for other companies pleaded guilty today to charges that he defrauded the U.S. Postal Service of more than \$1 million, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

Albert Barsa, 65, of Paramus, pleaded guilty to an Information charging him with defrauding the United States Postal Service. The Information to which he pleaded guilty stated that a misappropriated, unauthorized postage meter was used in furtherance of the scheme to defraud the Postal Service and customers of more than \$1 million between 1998 and January 2006.

Barsa pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge William H. Walls, who scheduled sentencing for July 17. For his plea to one count of mail fraud, Barsa faces a statutory maximum penalty of 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

At his plea hearing, Barsa said his company acted as a mailing agent for other companies and prepared mailings for those customers. The Information to which Barsa pleaded guilty stated that as part of the scheme to defraud the Postal Service and Direct Mail customers, a misappropriated, unauthorized postage meter was used to affix fraudulent postage to mail – postage that was worth more than \$1 million.

In effect, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office, the scheme allowed Barsa and his co-conspirator to bill customers for the full cost of postage when in fact the United States Postal Service received no payment for the postage. Barsa admitted that he then paid someone identified in today's proceeding as S.M. 50 percent of what the mailings would have cost had the mailings been legitimate.

Barsa admitted that to make the billings appear legitimate, he caused Direct Mail to send fraudulent forms to Direct Mail customers representing that the forms were provided by the Postal Service and that Direct Mail had paid the full cost of the postage. In one instance, Barsa admitted that an invoice to one customer for \$28,760.05 included a fraudulent postal form.

The investigation is continuing, Christie said.

Christie stated that the Information and plea were the result of a larger investigation being conducted by the United States Postal Inspection Service and the U.S. Attorney's Office, which remains ongoing.

Christie credited Postal Inspectors with the U.S. Postal Inspection Service in Newark, under the direction of Postal Inspector in Charge Thomas van de Merlen, for their work in developing the case.

The Government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Andrew Kogan of the U.S. Attorney's Terrorism Unit in Newark.

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Defense Counsel: Henry Klingeman, Esq.