

Department of Justice

Acting United States Attorney Kathleen Mehlretter
Western District of New York

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JULY 14, 2009
www.usdoj.gov/usao/nyw

CONTACT: Peggy Kelly McFarland
PHONE: (716) 843-5877
FAX: (716) 551-3051

TWO PEOPLE CHARGED IN UNITED NATIONS FRAUD CASE

BUFFALO, N.Y.--Acting United States Attorney Kathleen M. Mehlretter announced today the unsealing of a 14-count Indictment charging Deborah Bowers, of Clarence, New York, and Steve Jabar, of Tonawanda, New York, with wire fraud, money laundering and making false statements in connection with a scheme to defraud the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) of tens of thousands of dollars. The charges carry a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison, a fine of \$250,000, or both.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Timothy C. Lynch stated that the Indictment alleges that the defendants Steve Jabar and Deborah Bowers, beginning in or about June 2004, used their positions at Opportunities for Kids International (OKI), a not-for-profit corporation, to fraudulently obtain a \$350,000 grant from UNIFEM for the purpose of establishing a radio station in Iraq, when, in fact, they intended to divert ten of thousands of dollars of the UNIFEM grant money to pay their personal debts, expenses, credit card bills and property taxes. The Indictment further alleges that Steve Jabar and Deborah Bowers attempted to cover up their unlawful scheme by emailing a fraudulent quarterly report to UNIFEM purporting to account for all of the UNIFEM grant money as having been spent on the radio station and by making false statements to federal law enforcement agents who were investigating their unlawful scheme. Finally, the Indictment lists several withdraws and other transactions from OKI bank accounts, resulting in money laundering charges.

Acting U.S. Attorney Mehlretter said, "UNIFEM intended that the grant money would be used by the defendants and OKI to promote women's rights in Iraq. Although the defendants did establish a radio station in Iraq, they undermined the goal of the radio station by diverting tens of thousands of dollars of the grant money to enrich themselves."

The Indictment was the culmination of an investigation on the part of Special Agents of the Internal Revenue Service, under the direction of Patricia Haynes, Special Agent in Charge, New York Field Office, Special Agents of the Federal

Bureau of Investigation, under the direction of Acting Special Agent in Charge, Cory Nelson. Acting U.S. Attorney also praised the U.S. Department of State and the United States Mission to the United Nations for their assistance on this matter. The evidence was presented to the Grand Jury by Assistant U.S. Attorney Timothy C. Lynch, who will handle the trial of the case.

The fact that a defendant has been charged with a crime is merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.