



**U.S. Department of Justice**

United States Attorney  
Northern District of Illinois

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**TWO ROCKFORD MEN PLEAD GUILTY TO FOOD STAMP FRAUD**

ROCKFORD — Two Rockford men pleaded guilty today in Federal Court to wire fraud in connection with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (“SNAP”) (formerly known as the food stamp program). Defendants Abdulaziz Mohammed, 37, and Nassir Ali, 42, each admitted in separate criminal cases, to devising a scheme to defraud and to obtain money from the United States. The United States Department of Agriculture, through the State of Illinois Department of Public Aid, began converting from a traditional paper food stamp coupon system to what is known as Electronic Benefit Transfer card system. In Illinois, this system is known as the “LINK card benefits system.” LINK card benefits cannot be redeemed for non-food items, such as cigarettes, or for cash. Each defendant schemed to redeem LINK card benefits for cash and to allow customers to use LINK cards to purchase cigarettes.

In a written plea agreement, Mohammed admitted that he assisted an individual in purchasing non-food items, including cigarettes, by the LINK card system and redeemed LINK card benefits for cash for that individual. Mohammed was employed by Sal’s Food Mart in Rockford and wrongfully redeemed LINK card benefits on six different dates in 2010.

In a separate plea agreement, Ali admitted that he assisted an individual in purchasing non-food items, including cigarettes, by the LINK card system and redeemed LINK card benefits for

cash for that individual. Ali was employed by the Lucky Food Mart in Rockford and wrongfully redeemed LINK card benefits on two different occasions in 2010.

The charge in each case carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison, a fine of up to \$250,000, and mandatory restitution. The actual sentences will be determined by the United States District Court, guided by the advisory United States Sentencing Guidelines. Sentencing for Mohammed has been set for March 14, 2012 at 9:30 a.m. and sentencing for Ali has been set for March 14, 2012, at 2:30 p.m.

The guilty pleas were announced by Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, and Joe Smith, Special Agent-in-Charge of the United States Department of Agriculture-Office of Inspector General, Midwest Region-Chicago; Gary J. Hartwig, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Office of the Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement; Robert D. Grant, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation; Alvin Patton, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Office of the Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation Division; and Chet Epperson, Chief of Rockford Police.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney John G. McKenzie.

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