



Department of Justice

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JURY CONVICTS SIXTH DEFENDANT IN FOOD STAMP AND WIC PROGRAM FRAUD CASE

COLUMBUS - A federal jury has convicted a Columbus, Ohio man on charges connected with his involvement in a food stamp and WIC program fraud case.

Carter M. Stewart, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio, Joe N. Smith, Special Agent in Charge, Midwest Region, Chicago, U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of Inspector General; and Jose A. Gonzalez, Special Agent in Charge, Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation, Cincinnati Field Office announced the verdict returned today at the conclusion of a trial that began September 7 before U.S. District Judge Edmund A. Sargus, Jr.

After deliberating for five hours over two days, the jury convicted Shuceeb Geedi, 51, of one count each of conspiracy to defraud the United States, food stamp fraud, unlawful food stamp redemptions, conspiracy to commit money laundering, and two counts each of WIC program fraud and theft of public funds.

Geedi is one of eight Columbus residents who operated specialty markets in Columbus and were indicted in January 2008 charged with fraud involving the redemption of benefits from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Stamp and Women, Infants and Children (WIC) programs between January, 2002 and August 2006.

Geedi and Khalif Mohamed Abukar, Zeidi Said Omar, Saidi Kadi Sheikuna, and Ali Ahmed Said, owned, operated and managed City Dollar Store, a Somali specialty market located at 3350 Cleveland Avenue. On or about December 22, 2000, then store manager, Ali Ahmed Said, obtained a food stamp license for City Dollar Store. The license remained in effect through September 20, 2005 when Ali Ahmed Said purchased the market and applied for a new license which remained in effect through August 8, 2006.

Abdulahkim Said Abukar owned, operated or managed Marwaas Market, a Somali specialty market located at 4181 West Broad Street in Columbus. Store manager Khalif Mohamed Abukar obtained authorization for Marwaas Market to participate in the WIC program on or about August 24, 2003.

The co-defendants bought Food Stamp benefits with cash, accepted Food Stamp benefits as payment for ineligible items, and accepted Food Stamp benefits from customers as payment on loans obtained from the markets.

Mohammad Hussein allowed customers to swap benefit coupons for cash and allowing them to be used on non-authorized products.

Ahmed S. Jama, who did business as Muna Market, 3770 West Broad Street, Columbus, filed a false federal income tax return with the Internal Revenue Service.

Food Stamp Fraud and Money Laundering Conspiracy are each punishable by up to 20 years imprisonment. Theft of Public Funds carries a maximum possible sentence of ten years. All other crimes have five-year statutory maximum sentences.

Zeidi Omar pleaded guilty on March 2, 2009 to one count of unlawful food stamp redemption (presentation for payment of illegal EBT benefits) and one count of failure to file a federal income tax return. On December 3, 2009 he was sentenced to 3 years probation with 6 months of home confinement and \$200,000 in restitution to USDA-OIG, jointly and severally.

Ali Said pleaded guilty on February 26, 2009 to one count of conspiracy to defraud the United States and one count of WIC program fraud, as well as one forfeiture count (\$32,111 in currency). On December 3, 2009 he was sentenced to 3 years probation with 6 months in a half-way house and 6 months of home confinement, and \$200,000 in restitution to USDA-OIG, jointly and severally.

Abdulhakim Abukar pleaded guilty on February 19, 2009 to one count of conspiracy to defraud the United States and one count of food stamp fraud, as well as one forfeiture count (\$19,024 in currency). On December 10, 2009 he was sentenced to three years probation with six months of home confinement and \$66,666 in restitution to USDA-OIG, jointly and severally.

Ahmed Jama pleaded guilty on April 9, 2009 to one count of WIC program fraud and one count of filing a false federal income tax return, as well as one forfeiture count (\$13,525 in currency). On December 3, 2009 he was sentenced to three years probation with six months in a half-way house and 6 months of home confinement, and \$135,975 in restitution to USDA-OIG (\$86,474) and to the IRS (\$49,501).

Mohamed Hussein pleaded guilty on January 20, 2010 to one count of WIC program fraud and one count of filing a false federal income tax return, as well as one forfeiture count (\$150,864 in currency). On May 19, 2010 he was sentenced to 1 year probation with 6 months in a half-way house and 6 months of home confinement, and \$486,589 in restitution.

Khalif Abukar and Saidi Sheikuna are currently fugitives.

Stewart also commended the cooperative investigation by USDA Office of Inspector General and Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation agents and Assistant U.S. Attorney's Dave Bosley and Laura Denton, who are prosecuting the case.

Judge Sargus will set a date for sentencing.

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