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Thursday, June 8, 2017

Helena-West Helena Men Sentenced Following SNAP Benefits Fraud Scheme

LITTLE ROCK—Patrick C. Harris, Acting United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Arkansas, Diane Upchurch, Special Agent in Charge of the Little Rock Field Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and Dax Roberson, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the Office of Inspector General Southwest Region of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), announced today the sentencing of the two lead defendants in a scheme to defraud USDA and the SNAP food benefit program.

Thursday, United States District Judge Kristine G. Baker sentenced Khalid Alkarsh, 40, of Helena-West Helena, to 16 months in federal prison, and Bakil Mohamed Alqirsh, 27, also of Helena-West Helena, to three years' probation, with the first 10 months spent in home confinement. In addition, the two are jointly responsible for repaying the USDA \$107,486.36 in restitution.

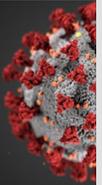
Alkarsh and Alqirsh each pleaded guilty on January 24, 2017, to conspiracy to defraud the USDA of money from the SNAP benefit program. SNAP benefits provide economic assistance for low-income individuals to purchase food. Alkarsh, who owned the Stop and Shop convenience store in Helena-West Helena, and Alqirsh, who was a cashier and manager at the store, allowed SNAP recipients to trade their SNAP benefits for ineligible items such as beer and cigarettes, and for cash. When a SNAP recipient redeemed their benefits for cash, Alkarsh and Alqirsh paid the recipient approximately 60% of the transaction amount, and the Stop and Shop kept 40%.

Alkarsh and Alqirsh were two of 24 individuals initially indicted in the scheme, with the other 22 alleged to be SNAP recipients who improperly redeemed their benefits at the Stop and Shop. Two defendants were later dismissed, and all others have pleaded



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guilty and either been sentenced or are awaiting sentencing.

The investigation was conducted by the FBI and USDA, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Julie Peters.

Topic(s):
Financial Fraud

Component(s):
USAO - Arkansas, Eastern

Updated June 9, 2017

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