



U.S. Department of Justice

**Terrence Berg
United States Attorney
Eastern District of Michigan**

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For Immediate Release:

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EVENT: Indictment

Defendant: Fouad Tanana et al

**TWO DEARBORN RESIDENTS CHARGED
WITH FOOD STAMP FRAUD**

Acting United States Attorney Terrence Berg announced that Fouad Tanana, age 26, and Hassan El-Moussaoui, age 37, both of Dearborn, were indicted by a federal grand jury in Detroit on charges of food stamp fraud. The indictment alleges a scheme to defraud the United States Department of Agriculture ("USDA") of approximately \$274,000 in Food Stamp Program benefits. Tanana and El-Moussaoui, engaged in the fraud during 2004 until 2007, while working at Fox Mini Mart, Detroit, MI.

Mr. Berg was joined in the announcement by Joe N. Smith, Special Agent in Charge, United States Department of Agriculture - Office of Inspector General and Maurice Aouate, Special Agent in Charge, Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation Division.

The indictment alleges that the defendants illegally paid food stamp beneficiaries cash in exchange for the food stamp benefits held via their EBT (Electronic Benefit Transfer) debit

cards. As noted in the indictment, the defendants typically paid 50% for the amount charged to the USDA Food Stamp Program – for example if a beneficiary wanted \$20.00 in cash, the defendants would charge the food stamp card \$40.00. The USDA would then unwittingly reimburse the store where the defendants worked \$40.00 – thinking that a legitimate transaction for food had taken place.

Under federal law, food stamps cannot be traded or sold for cash, and they cannot be used to buy non-food items such as gasoline, tobacco or alcoholic beverages.

Acting USA Berg said, “The food stamp program is intended to provide millions of low income American families with their nutritional needs. However, abuse by some stores threaten the integrity of the entire program and this office will aggressively pursue those who seek to destroy it.”

Special Agent in-Charge Smith said; "The USDA Office of Inspector General, Office of Investigations, is committed to aggressively investigating the criminal activities of store owners and employees who deprive needy citizens of the Detroit metropolitan area access to nutritious meals. We appreciate the assistance from our partners in the Federal and state law enforcement community."

Special Agent in Charge Aouate said, “IRS Criminal Investigation's unique role is to follow the money and identify those guilty parties who are financial benefitting from these illegal actions. Working with the United States Department of Agriculture Office of Inspector General and our other law enforcement partners, we will make sure that there are stiff consequences to these types of fraudulent activities that prey on the people that can least afford it.”

An indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. A defendant is entitled to a fair trial in which it will be the government's burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. If convicted, the defendants face penalties of up to 20 years' imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine.

The case was investigated by special agents of the United States Department of Agriculture Office of Inspector General, and the United States Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation Division.