



U.S. Department of Justice

**Stephen J. Murphy
United States Attorney
Eastern District of Michigan**

*Suite 2001
211 West Fort Street
Detroit, Michigan 48226-3277*

For Immediate Release:

Contact: Gina Balaya (313) 226-9758

February 26, 2008

EVENT: Sentenced

Defendant: Elfat El Aouar

**WIFE OF LASHISH OWNER AND SISTER OF FORMER CIA/ FBI EMPLOYEE
SENTENCED ON NATURALIZATION FRAUD CHARGES**

Elfat El Aouar, 40, of Plymouth, a former Vice President of Finance for La Shish, Inc. and the spouse of La Shish owner, Talal Chahine, was sentenced today in federal court in Detroit, announced United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy.

Mr. Murphy was joined in the announcement by Brian M. Moskowitz, Special Agent in Charge of the Detroit Office of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Andrew G. Arena, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation.

El Aouar was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge Avern Cohn to serve three months in prison and was stripped of her U.S. citizenship as a result of her pleading guilty in November, 2007 to charges of conspiracy and naturalization fraud. The three month sentence will run concurrent with the 18 month prison sentence El Aouar is currently serving on tax evasion charges. Upon her release from federal custody, El Aouar will be subject to deportation proceedings

According to court documents, El Aouar entered the United States from Lebanon on a

six month non-immigrant visitor visa which was extended once to June 11, 1989. After El Aouar's visa expired, she remained in the country residing in Taylor, Michigan with her sister, Nada Nadim Prouty and Samar Kahlil Nabbouh.

On November 15, 1990, El Aouar entered into a fraudulent marriage with Gordon Wymer in Detroit, Michigan for the purpose of evading U.S. immigration laws. El Aouar later submitted a series of false, fraudulent and forged documents and letters to federal immigration officials to verify the validity of the fraudulent marriage in order to obtain permanent residency status, and, later, U.S. citizenship, thereby committing naturalization fraud. In fact, El Aouar hired Wymer to marry her, never had any relationship with Wymer and never resided with him as husband and wife. On June 30, 1995, El Aouar filed for divorce.

In addition, El Aouar defrauded the Federal Bureau of Investigation into hiring her sister Nada Nadim Prouty in 1998, by serving as a reference for her and withholding derogatory information about Prouty from the FBI. In November 2007, Prouty pleaded guilty to charges of fraudulently obtaining U.S. citizenship, which she later used to gain employment at the FBI and CIA; accessing a federal computer system to unlawfully query information about herself, El Aouar, Talal Chahine and the terrorist organization Hizballah.

United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy said, "With so many honest and hard-working immigrants seeking U.S. citizenship, and with all the rights and privileges that citizenship confers, those who obtain this precious right by fraud cannot be permitted to remain unchallenged. As evidenced by today's plea, we will take appropriate action, including filing criminal charges, in such situations."

"Becoming an American citizen is a privilege, not a right. We will not tolerate those who pledge allegiance to this nation knowing that the oath they took was achieved through lies," said Brian M. Moskowitz, special agent in charge of the ICE Office of Investigations in Detroit. "ICE special agents will work with our partners in the U.S. Attorney's Office to ensure that those privileges are removed."

El Aouar's husband, Talal Chahine is currently a fugitive believed to be in Lebanon. He was charged in 2006 in the Eastern District of Michigan with tax evasion in connection with a scheme to conceal more than \$20 million in cash received by La Shish restaurants and to route funds to persons in Lebanon. Last year, Chahine was also charged in the Eastern District of Michigan, along with a senior ICE official in Detroit and others in a bribery and extortion conspiracy in which federal immigration benefits were allegedly awarded to illegal aliens in exchange for money and, in a separate indictment, with Conspiracy to Defraud the United States in connection with the marriage and naturalization fraud involving Nada Prouty, Elfat El Aouar and Samar Spinelli.

Mr. Murphy commended the Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the U.S. Department of State, Diplomatic Security Service, and the Internal Revenue Service for their excellent investigative efforts leading to the successful prosecution of Elfat El Aouar.

The case was prosecuted by Eric M. Straus, Chief of the National Security Unit, and Kenneth R. Chadwell, Assistant U.S. Attorney, from the U.S. Attorney's office for the Eastern District of Michigan, as well as Mark J. Jebson, Special Assistant U.S. Attorney and Senior Assistant Chief Counsel for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.