



NEWS RELEASE
OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
MIDDLE DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA

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For Immediate Release
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United States Attorney David R. Dugas announced that WALID MIZYED, age 33, a resident of Baton Rouge, and MAHER MIZYED, age 31, a resident of New Orleans, were each charged yesterday in separate Bills of Information with wire fraud and tax evasion. It was further announced that ABDALLAH MIZYED, age 29, and DAHES AYYAD, age 42, both residents of Baton Rouge, were charged yesterday in Bills of Information with tax evasion.

The four individuals charged are former owners of Ragusa Meat Market, located at 2509 Gardere Lane, Baton Rouge, and Ragusa Supermarket, located at 1457 Terrace Avenue, Baton Rouge. The Bills of Information charge that from January 1999 through August 2000, Walid and Maher Mizyed paid cash to food stamp recipients and then made inflated charges on the recipients' Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards. EBT cards are issued to Louisiana Food Stamp Program beneficiaries so that they can make purchases at authorized retail grocery stores.

The Bills of Information charge that Walid and Maher Mizyed filed false income tax returns for 1998 and 1999, which returns understated their taxable income and the amount of tax due and owing thereon. Separate Bills of Information charge Abdallah Mizyed with filing a false income tax return in 1998 and Dahes Ayyad with filing a false income tax return in 1999.

WALID and MAHER MIZYED could each receive a maximum sentence of imprisonment of fifteen years and fines of up to \$750,000 if convicted on all counts.

ABDALLAH MIZYED and DAHES AYYAD could each receive a maximum sentence of imprisonment of five years and a fine of up to \$250,000 if convicted.

The case was investigated by the Internal Revenue Service, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the U.S. Secret Service, and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys M. Patricia Jones and Ian F. Hipwell.

NOTE: A bill of information is merely an accusation by the United States Attorney that offenses have been committed by the defendants. The defendants, of course, are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty at trial.

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