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# PRESS RELEASE

## **Internet CEO Pleads Guilty in U.S. Court**

**Washington, D.C.** – The Office of the Inspector General for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) announced that as a result of an investigation Khaled Bichara, President and Chief Executive Officer of LINKdotNET, pled guilty in Manhattan federal court to making false statements in an application to USAID--a felony under Title 18 United States Code 1001.

The USAID-conducted investigation was made in conjunction with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York. The guilty plea was entered on Tuesday, March 8, 2005.

According to a complaint filed earlier in the case, the application to USAID on behalf of LINKdotNET, an Internet company located in Cairo, Egypt, requested approximately \$2,104,688 in financing through the USAID supported Commodity Import Program (CIP) for the purchase of communications equipment. As part of the application, Bichara included two sham bids which were purported to be from two American suppliers. The sham bids were allegedly from CyberCrossing, a company registered in Delaware without a known place of business, and Gulflink, a company based in California.

Bichara faces a maximum sentence of five years in prison and a fine of \$250,000. Sentencing is scheduled for June 8, 2005 at 4:00 p.m. before Judge Loretta A. Preska.

The Office of Inspector General would like to recognize and thank the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York for their hard work in bringing this case to a resolution.

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