



U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
Eastern District of Wisconsin*

517 East Wisconsin Avenue

Milwaukee, WI 53202

PRESS RELEASE

April 27, 2012

NINE DEFENDANTS INDICTED FOR CONTRABAND CIGARETTE TRAFFICKING AND POSSESSION AND SALE OF COUNTERFEIT CIGARETTE TAX STAMPS

James L. Santelle, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Wisconsin, announced today that as the result of a year long investigation by the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, a federal grand jury has indicted 9 defendants for contraband cigarette trafficking in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 371 and 2342(a) as well as possession and sale of counterfeit cigarette tax stamps in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 2315.

The indictment alleges that the defendants conspired to possess and transport unstamped cigarettes in quantities of 10,000 or more from Wisconsin to Illinois in order to evade Illinois state and local taxes. The indictment further alleges that individual defendants possessed and transported between one and 182 cases or between 12,000 to over 2 million cigarettes, and that collectively they evaded between \$1 million and \$4.6 million in state and local taxes.

The indictment also alleges that defendants Uddin, Bheri and Aslam sold quantities of counterfeit Wisconsin and Illinois tax stamps.

Each conspiracy and contraband cigarette trafficking offense is punishable by up to five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. Each counterfeit tax offense is punishable by up to 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

The following individuals are charged in the indictment:

Defendant	Age and Residency	Counts
Mohammed Mazharuddin	40, Oak Creek, WI	Charged with conspiracy and 1 count of contraband cigarette trafficking
Mohammad Uddin	29, Naperville, IL	Charged with conspiracy, 21 counts of contraband cigarette trafficking, and 1 count of possession and sale of counterfeit tax stamps
Maher T. Sunnokrot	39, Worth, IL	Charged with conspiracy and 1 count of

		contraband cigarette trafficking
Farrukh Aslam	27, Glendale Heights, IL	Charged with conspiracy, 10 counts of contraband cigarette trafficking, and 4 counts of possession and sale of counterfeit tax stamps
Shakil Wamiq	31, Elgin, IL	Charged with conspiracy and 4 counts of contraband cigarette trafficking
Mazher Ali Khan	48, Evergreen Park, IL	Charged with conspiracy and 4 counts of contraband cigarette trafficking
Haroon H. Bheri	52, Glendale Heights, IL	Charged with conspiracy, 11 counts of contraband cigarette trafficking, and 3 counts of possession and sale of counterfeit tax stamps
Adil Majid	53, Bolingbrook, IL	Charged with conspiracy and 8 counts of contraband cigarette trafficking
Ahsan Uddin	27, Naperville, IL	Charged with conspiracy and 4 counts of contraband cigarette trafficking

In announcing the charges against the nine defendants in the 42-count indictment, unsealed today, United States Attorney Santelle stated: "The defendants conspired to evade the established cigarette tax laws of the States of Illinois and Wisconsin for the express purpose of self-enrichment; in doing so, they also prevented the legitimate collection of millions of dollars in state revenues. Their trafficking in contraband cigarettes, including their use of counterfeit tax stamps, has been the focus of a productive and extensive investigation by the United States Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, resulting in the grand jury indictment. In cooperation with our federal investigative partner, our office will prosecute this matter—and others like it that similarly involve the possession and transportation of contraband goods—to ensure the integrity of the state tax systems from which all law-abiding citizens benefit."

In a statement issued by the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, St. Paul Field Division Special Agent in Charge Bernard J. Zapor stated, "These contraband economies deprive revenue from the states at a time when it is gravely needed."

This case will be prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Carol L. Kraft.

The public is cautioned that an indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. A defendant is presumed innocent and is entitled to a fair trial at which time the government must prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

#

For additional information contact Public Information Office Dean Puschnig at (414)297-1700.