Attorney General Bill McCollum News Release

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South Florida Men Sentenced in $15 Million Check Cashing Fraud

~ Criminal charges include racketeering, grand theft, workers' compensation fraud, money laundering ~

TALLAHASSEE, FL - Attorney General Bill McCollum today announced that several South Florida men have been sentenced to terms ranging from county jail time to nearly three years in prison after pleading guilty to their involvement in a $15 million check cashing fraud scheme. The operation involved criminal charges of racketeering, workers' compensation fraud, grand theft, forgery and money laundering, among others. A total of six co-conspirators were prosecuted by the Attorney General's Office of Statewide Prosecution.

Edigar Neves, 49, was sentenced to two years and nine months in prison, and Mohammad Salameh, 50; Amjad Abuzahra, 39; Francisco Nunes, 42; and Zeid Daas, 40, were sentenced to varying terms of county jail time, community control and/or probation. The co-defendants ran a scheme which used shell companies to funnel more than $15 million through a check cashing store in Pompano Beach to avoid paying workers' compensation insurance premiums. For an extra fee charged at the check cashing store, dozens of uninsured construction companies were offered the use of the shell company name and certificate of insurance to perform construction work for hundreds of contractors throughout Florida.

Nunes created two of the shell companies and Neves created a third for the purposes of the scheme. Salameh, Abuzahra and Daas worked at the Atlantic Check Cashing store where the checks were cashed and the currency transaction reports were completed and submitted. The fees collected at the check cashing store were provided to the co-defendants, and the owners and operators of the check cashing store covered up the scheme by completing and submitting fraudulent currency transaction reports. The operation was investigated by the Florida Department of Financial Services and the Sheriffs' Offices for Broward and Palm Beach counties.

In addition to his sentence, Salameh was ordered to pay more than $138,000 in restitution to the victims. The sentence was handed down by Judge Michael Gates of the Seventeenth Judicial Circuit. Marco Delgado, the sixth co-defendant, previously pleaded guilty to similar charges and is awaiting sentencing.