



U.S. Department of Justice

Eastern District of Michigan
211 W. Fort Street

Suite 2001
Detroit, Michigan 48226

December 4, 2007

CONTACT: Gina Balaya - USAO (313) 226-9758

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Detroit, Michigan

**MARINE CORPS OFFICER AND TWO TIME IRAQ WAR VETERAN
PLEADS GUILTY TO CITIZENSHIP FRAUD CONSPIRACY**

Samar Khalil Spinelli, 39, currently of Okinawa, Japan, formerly of Taylor, Michigan, a Captain in the United States Marine Corps, pleaded guilty today in federal court in Detroit to conspiring with former FBI Agent and CIA employee Nada Nadim Prouty and Elfat El Aouar, the wife of fugitive restaurateur Talal Chahine, to commit citizenship fraud and passport fraud, 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.

At a hearing in Detroit before U.S. District Court Judge Avern Cohn, Spinelli, entered a plea of guilty to counts one and two of a fourth superseding information. Count one of the information charges conspiracy, for which the maximum penalty is five years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine. Count two charges passport fraud, for which the maximum penalty is 10 years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine.

According to court documents, Spinelli (originally Samar Khalil Nabouh) entered the United States from Lebanon on a student visa in 1989. She resided in Taylor, Michigan with Elfat El Aouar and Nada Nadim Prouty. On April 13, 1990, Spinelli entered into a fraudulent marriage with Jean Paul Deladurantaye in St. Clair Shores, Michigan for the purpose of evading U.S. immigration laws. Spinelli 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, Spinelli hired Deladurantaye to marry her, never had any relationship with Deladurantaye and never resided with him as husband and wife. On August 31, 1995, after obtaining her U.S. citizenship, Spinelli filed for divorce falsely claiming to have "lived and cohabited together as husband and wife."

On December 19, 1997, Spinelli utilized her fraudulently obtained U.S. citizenship to obtain a commission as an officer in the United States Marine Corps. It is a prerequisite to becoming a commissioned officer, that one be a U.S. citizen. Spinelli was in the midst of her second tour of combat in Iraq, when she was extracted to answer the citizenship fraud charges.

In addition, Spinelli facilitated the fraudulent marriage of Nada Nadim Prouty (then Nada Nadim Al Aouar) to her fake brother-in-law, Chris Deladurantaye. Spinelli and Prouty were thus technically sisters-in-law through dual fraudulent marriages, while continuing to reside together in Taylor, Michigan. Spinelli later assisted Nada Prouty in defrauding the Federal Bureau of Investigation into hiring Prouty by serving as a reference for Prouty in 1998 while attending the Marine Corps Basic School in Quantico, Virginia. Notwithstanding her knowledge that Prouty had fraudulently procured U.S. citizenship and was thus completely ineligible to become an FBI agent, Spinelli told FBI investigators that she was not aware of any activity or conduct in Prouty's background which could in any way be used to subject her to influence, pressure, coercion, or compromise, or which would negatively reflect upon Prouty's character. Nada Prouty recently pleaded guilty to charges of fraudulently obtaining U.S. citizenship, which she later used to gain employment at the FBI and CIA, and to accessing a federal computer system to unlawfully query information about herself, Talal Chahine, Elfat El Aouar and the terrorist organization Hizballah.

United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy said, "With so many honest and hard-working immigrants seeking U.S. citizenship, with all the rights and privileges that confers, we cannot permit those who obtain this precious right by fraud to remain unchallenged. We will take action when appropriate to bring criminal charges in such situations."

Brian M. Moskowitz, Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement who stated that, "becoming an American citizen is privilege not a right." "We will not tolerate those who pledge their allegiance to this nation knowing that the oath they took was achieved through lies and fraud. ICE Special Agents will work with our partners in the U.S. Attorney's Office to ensure that those privileges are removed."

Under the terms of the plea agreement with the government, Spinelli is facing a term of imprisonment of 6 to 12 months and must separate from the U.S. Marine Corps. A sentencing date has not been set.

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 month, 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.

The ongoing investigation into this matter is being conducted by the FBI and ICE, with assistance from the U.S. Department of State, Diplomatic Security Service, the Internal Revenue Service, and the Naval Criminal Investigative Service. Mr. Murphy also extended his appreciation to the U.S. Marine Corps for its full cooperation in the investigation.

The case is being 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.

###