



U.S. Department of Justice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 17, 2017

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PRESS RELEASE

FORMER OFFICIALS OF CENTRAL UNITED TALMUDIC ACADEMY INDICTED IN
\$3 MILLION FRAUD SCHEME

Defendants Fraudulently Submitted Reimbursement Claims for School Meals That Were
Never Served

A five-count indictment was unsealed today in United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York charging Elozer Porges and Joel Lowy, the former Executive Director and former Assistant Director, respectively, of the school system known as Central United Talmudic Academy (CUTA) in Brooklyn, New York, with one count of conspiracy to commit mail and wire fraud and four counts of mail fraud. The defendants are scheduled to be arraigned this afternoon before United States Magistrate Judge Viktor V. Pohorelsky at the Brooklyn federal courthouse.

The charges were announced by Bridget M. Rohde, Acting United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, William F. Sweeney, Jr., Assistant Director-in-Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, New York Field Office (FBI), Mark Peters, Commissioner, New York City Department of Investigation, and Special Agent-in-Charge, Bethanne M. Dinkins, United States Department of Agriculture, Office of Inspector General.

As alleged in the indictment, between 2013 and 2015, Porges and Lowy submitted documents to the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) that falsely claimed that school children had received meals which, in fact, they had never been served. The defendants fraudulently inflated the number of meals served at various CUTA schools in order to obtain larger reimbursement payments pursuant to the federal government's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The CACFP is a program designed to assist schools and other institutions in providing meals to, among others, at-risk children. In total, Porges and Lowy, based on their false representations, fraudulently obtained approximately \$3 million in reimbursement payments to CUTA.

“Former CUTA Executive Director Porges and Assistant Director Lowy allegedly obtained \$3 million from a federal program designed to fund meals for needy children by claiming to have served meals they did not serve, thus undermining a program designed to assist the most vulnerable members of our community,” stated Acting United States Attorney Rohde. “We will continue to work closely with our law enforcement partners to root out fraudulent schemes that misuse public funds.”

“The Child and Adult Care Food Program strives to provide for at-risk children, and as school officials, Porges and Lowy should have strived to do the same,” stated Assistant Director-in-Charge Sweeney. “Instead, they allegedly falsified documents to gain approximately \$3 million in reimbursement for meals that were never served. To defraud programs designed to help those in need is simply inexcusable, and we will work relentlessly with our law enforcement partners to thoroughly investigate these frauds.”

“As charged, these defendants stole food from children in need by diverting millions of dollars in public funds intended to pay for their dinners,” stated DOI Commissioner Peters. “Public funds must be spent for public purposes and, when they are not, DOI will expose the fraud and arrest the wrongdoers. DOI thanks our dedicated law enforcement partners on this case: the United States Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of New York, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Office of the Inspector General for the United States Department of Agriculture.”

“The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) was created to provide nutrition assistance to children and adults who are truly in need,” stated Special Agent-in-Charge Dinkins. “Those involved in fraud and abuse of USDA feeding programs will be investigated by our office to the fullest extent. In this joint investigation with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the New York City Department of Investigation, we worked together to identify and hold accountable those who sought to profit from the CACFP through illegal schemes. The USDA, Office of Inspector General will continue to dedicate investigative resources, working with our law enforcement and prosecutorial partners, to protect the integrity of these programs and bring to justice those who commit fraud.”

The charges in the indictment are merely allegations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty. If convicted, the defendants face up to 20 years’ imprisonment on the conspiracy to commit wire fraud and mail fraud count, as well as on each of the mail fraud counts.

The government’s case is being prosecuted by the Office’s Public Integrity Section. Assistant United States Attorneys Erik Paulsen and Maria Cruz Melendez are in charge of the prosecution.

The Defendants:

ELOZER PORGES

Age: 43

Brooklyn, NY

JOEL LOWY

Age: 29

Brooklyn, NY

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 17-CR-431 (NGG)