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MADIGAN: COOK COUNTY TOBACCO STORE OWNER CHARGED WITH TAX FRAUD

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced that a Cook County tobacco store owner was charged with underreporting nearly \$1 million in sales of tobacco products in a five-month period.

Naser Suheil, 45, of Bridgeview, was charged with tax fraud, money laundering and forgery for defrauding the state out of over \$335,770.62. Between May and September 2014, Suheil allegedly underreported over \$928,600 in sales to the IDOR as the owner of E&N United Corp., located at 9250 S. Harlem Ave., in Bridgeview, Ill. Madigan accused Suheil of operating a scheme to avoid reporting sales by make it appear as though E&N's tobacco sales were being made to an Indiana distributor because under Illinois law, sales to out-of-state corporations are tax exempt.

According to Madigan, Suheil directed an employee to establish a corporation in Indiana, Istanbul Enterprises, under the employee's name. Suheil gave the employee cash and instructions to deposit the money into Istanbul Enterprises' account. Under the guise that Istanbul Enterprises was purchasing tobacco products from E&N, the money would then be wired back to E&N without Suheil having reported the sales as taking place in Illinois or paying state tobacco product taxes.

"Instead of following the law, this defendant masterminded a scheme that defrauded the state out of hundreds of thousands of dollars," Madigan said. "I will continue to prosecute defendants that engage in tax fraud against the state."

The investigation was conducted by the IDOR's Criminal Investigations Division.

"Allegations of tobacco products tax fraud are something we take very seriously," said Connie Beard, Director of the Illinois Department of Revenue. "I commend the job performed by the Department of Revenue's Criminal Investigations Unit, as well as the work currently being done by the Attorney General's office as they continue efforts to protect Illinois taxpayers from fraud."

Madigan's Special Prosecutions Bureau and the IDOR investigate and prosecute tobacco store owners and operators who defraud the state by evading sales tax payments. Since increasing efforts to investigate and prosecute these cases, the state has successfully prosecuted over 100 tax evasion cases related to the illegal transportation, unlawful possession or unreported sale of cigarettes and other tobacco products, and defendants have been ordered to pay over \$9 million in reimbursements to the state. Additionally, the state has seized 32,000 cartons of illegal cigarettes and over 165,000 packs of other tobacco products.

Assistant Attorney General Stephanie Pauly is handling the case for Madigan's Special Prosecutions Bureau.

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