

# Providence Man Admits to Illegal Acquisition of SNAP Benefits, Unlawful Possession of a Firearm

Wednesday, May 29, 2024

## For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Rhode Island

PROVIDENCE, RI – A Dominican national unlawfully in the United States and living in Providence admitted to a federal judge today that he participated in a conspiracy that defrauded the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) of more than \$213,000 in benefits, and that at the time of his arrest he was illegally in possession of a firearm, announced United States Attorney Zachary A. Cunha.

Giomar Lopez Meireles, 41, pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court in Providence to charges of conspiracy to commit wire fraud, illegal acquisition or use of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits, and unlawful possession of a firearm. He is scheduled to be sentenced on September 4, 2024. The defendant's sentences will be determined by a federal district judge after consideration of the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

According to information presented to the court, Lopez Meireles conspired with others as part of a scheme that used stolen identities and social security numbers to submit fraudulent applications for SNAP benefits in the form of electronic benefit transfer, or EBT, cards. Many of the ill-gotten government funded benefit cards were either mailed to Lopez Meireles's residence or to nearby addresses. Upon receipt of the SNAP EBT cards, Lopez Meireles used the cards to make purchases for himself and others, or sold the cards to others for cash.

Fraudulent applications submitted between about September 2021 to November 2023 to the Rhode Island Department of Human Services, which administers the federally-funded SNAP program, resulted in approximately \$213,397 in benefits being issued. A court-authorized search of Lopez Meireles's residence resulted in the seizure of a collection of EBT cards, many of which were wrapped in a paper ledger listing the dollar amounts and PINs on the cards. Agents also seized a 9mm pistol found wrapped in clothing in Lopez Meireles's bedroom closet.

This matter was investigated the U.S. Department of Agriculture - Office of Inspector General and the Rhode Island Office of Internal Audit - Fraud Detection & Prevention Unit. Valuable assistance was provided by U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Marshals Service, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, Department of Homeland Security - Office of Inspector General, Social Security Administration - Office of Inspector General, Rhode Island State Police, Providence Police Department, and Woonsocket Police Department.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Julianne Klein.

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