



U.S. Department of Justice

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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Former Deputy Director of USAID Contractor and His Wife Plead Guilty to Embezzling More Than \$1 Million - Admit Conspiring to Defraud Agency of Funds Meant for Global Health -**

WASHINGTON - Mark Adams, a former deputy director at a private contractor that did business with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and his wife, Latasha Bell, pled guilty today to federal conspiracy charges stemming from the embezzlement of more than \$1 million from a program meant to address global health problems. Among other things, Adams and Bell admitted using the money to renovate their home and purchase a luxury car.

The guilty pleas were announced by Ronald C. Machen Jr., U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia, and Michael G. Carroll, Deputy Inspector General for the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Adams, 44, and Bell, 36, of Fort Washington, Md., each pled guilty before the Honorable Beryl A. Howell, in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, to one count of conspiracy to commit wire and mail fraud. As part of the pleas, they agreed to pay full restitution, and consented to an order forfeiting the amount stolen. As indicated in court filings, the government has already seized about \$49,000 in proceeds from the scheme.

Judge Howell scheduled sentencing for Dec. 14, 2012. Under federal sentencing guidelines, Adams faces a sentence of up to 51 to 63 months of incarceration. Under the plea agreement, Bell agreed to a sentence of home confinement.

As part of the plea, Adams and Bell admitted that Adams used his position as deputy director at a private USAID contractor to submit and approve false and fraudulent invoices and thereby obtain money. Adams admitted his false invoices generated more than \$1.084 million in

fraudulent payments between 2006 and 2010. The bogus invoices claimed to bill for services from Bell and companies controlled by Adams's friends, such as co-conspirator Everett Lipscomb Jr. However, the work and services claimed on the invoices were not in fact provided.

Adams and Bell received the payments either directly as check and wire payments to Bell or indirectly, when Lipscomb and others paid Adams and Bell part of the money they received. Adams and Bell also used fraudulent invoices to pay a home renovation contractor to complete an extensive renovation of their home. In another instance, Adams and Bell received funds that they used to buy a luxury automobile.

Adams admitted that, by approving the bogus invoices, he caused the USAID contractor, and ultimately USAID, to pay these fraudulent bills out of money from USAID's global health program. The program addresses major global issues, including HIV/AIDS.

"The American people have generously devoted funds to improving public health around the world, and this couple exploited that generosity for personal gain," said U.S. Attorney Machen. "They bought a fancy car and renovated their home with more than \$1 million intended to fight global epidemics like AIDS. We will continue to seek out and hold accountable the contractors who line their pockets by embezzling from the American taxpayer."

"Today's pleas provide another example of our zero tolerance for fraud and malfeasance," said Deputy Inspector General Carroll. "Such abuse of taxpayer resources is unacceptable and I commend the work of our investigators and colleagues at the Department of Justice in addressing it."

Lipscomb, 42, of Aliso Viejo, Calif., pled guilty in March 2012 to one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud and related forfeiture allegations. He admitted that he participated in embezzling about \$386,279 as part of the scheme. In addition, he admitted that he set up a shell corporation and bank accounts to receive the fraudulent payments and sent them back to Adams. He also acknowledged creating an e-mail account under an assumed name to advance the scheme. Under federal sentencing guidelines, Lipscomb faces a sentence of up to 21 to 27 months of incarceration. He is scheduled to be sentenced on Nov. 5, 2012.

In announcing the pleas, U.S. Attorney Machen and Deputy Inspector General Carroll commended the work of the special agents from the USAID Office of Inspector General, which investigated the case. They also thanked those who worked on the case from the U.S. Attorney's Office, including Paralegal Specialists Krishawn Graham and Nicole Wattelet, Forensic Accountant Crystal Boodoo, Assistant U.S. Attorney Anthony Saler, who handled forfeiture issues, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Jonathan Hooks, who is prosecuting the case.