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**STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK, MAN SENTENCED TO 54 MONTHS IN PRISON FOR
MULTIMILLION-DOLLAR ORGANIZED RETAIL CRIME CONSPIRACY**

NEWARK, N.J. – A Staten Island, New York, man was sentenced today to 54 months in prison for his role in a large-scale, organized, retail crime scheme involving the theft of tens of millions of dollars’ worth of over-the-counter (OTC) pharmaceuticals and health and beauty aid (HBA) products, U.S. Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

Mohammed Abuteer, 27, previously pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Kevin McNulty to an information charging him with one count of conspiracy to transport stolen goods interstate. Judge McNulty imposed the sentence today in Newark federal court.

According to documents filed in this case and statements made in court:

From 2008 through May 2013, Abuteer participated in an elaborate scheme to steal and resell HBA and OTC, such as Claritin, Zantac, Mucinex, Prilosec, and Crest White Strips. The items were stolen from retail stores including Target, Wal-Mart, and CVS, and military commissaries, some of which were located in New Jersey.

Conspirators known as “boosters” stole HBA and OTC products and sold them to low-level “fences” at a fraction of the retail value. For example, a package of 30-count Crest White Strips, which retailed for approximately \$50, would be sold for \$11. The fences resold the items to mid-level distributors – including Abuteer, and his brother, Salim Abutair, who was previously charged by complaint with participating in the conspiracy and is now a fugitive in Jordan. The distributors resold the items to higher-level distributors, who then sold the stolen goods to retailers or directly to consumers.

Abuteer maintained an inventory of his stolen product in a large storage unit in Staten Island, where he and others “cleaned” the items by removing security packaging and other labels that identified the retail stores from which the products were stolen. He used the storage unit to arrange for deliveries of merchandise to other conspirators. Abuteer and his brother also maintained several bank accounts from which they paid for the stolen merchandise and where they held their profits. Over the course of Abuteer’s involvement in the conspiracy, he and his brother purchased tens of millions of dollars of stolen HBA and OTC merchandise. Abuteer was arrested in May 2013 while attempting to travel to Jordan. At the time of his arrest, he was

carrying \$10,000 in cash, and federal agents seized approximately \$300,000 worth of stolen items from his storage unit.

In addition to the prison term, Judge McNulty sentenced Abuteer to two years of supervised release and entered a money judgment of \$1,301,500, representing the proceeds of the scheme. He also forfeited certain assets previously seized by the government, including approximately \$66,000 and a property in Staten Island. Abuteer, an illegal alien, has been out on bail on home detention for the majority of time since his arrest.

U.S. Attorney Fishman credited special agents with the New York field office of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Raymond Parmar Jr.; agents of the U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Criminal Investigative Service, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Craig Rupert; postal inspectors of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, under the direction of Postal Inspector in Charge Maria L. Kelokates; agents of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Inspector General, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge William G. Squires Jr.; and agents of the U.S. Air Force, Office of Special Investigations, under the direction of Detachment Commander Matthew Sarkissian, with the investigation leading to today's sentence.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Joseph B. Shumofsky of the Economic Crimes Unit.

Today's sentencing is part of efforts underway by President Obama's Financial Fraud Enforcement Task Force. The task force was established to wage an aggressive, coordinated and proactive effort to investigate and prosecute financial crimes. With more than 20 federal agencies, 94 U.S. attorneys' offices, and state and local partners, it's the broadest coalition of law enforcement, investigatory and regulatory agencies ever assembled to combat fraud. Since its formation, the task force has made great strides in facilitating increased investigation and prosecution of financial crimes; enhancing coordination and cooperation among federal, state and local authorities; addressing discrimination in the lending and financial markets; and conducting outreach to the public, victims, financial institutions and other organizations. Since fiscal year 2009, the Justice Department has filed over 18,000 financial fraud cases against more than 25,000 defendants. For more information on the task force, please visit www.StopFraud.gov

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