



## PRESS RELEASE

# South Florida Telecom Company and its CEO Pay \$128 Million and CEO is Sentenced to 5 Years for Massive Government Program Fraud

Friday, July 25, 2025

### For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District of Florida

MIAMI –Issa Asad, 51, of Southwest Ranches, Florida, and Q Link Wireless LLC, of Dania Beach, Florida, were sentenced yesterday for conspiring to defraud and commit offenses against the United States in connection with a years-long scheme to steal over \$100 million from a celebrated federal program providing discounted phone service to people in need. Asad, Q Link’s CEO, was also sentenced for laundering money from a separate scheme to defraud a different federal program meant to aid individuals and businesses hurt by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Asad and Q Link were each sentenced on Count 1 of an Information, which charged them with conspiring to commit wire fraud and to steal government money, and also with conspiring to defraud the United States, Asad was also sentenced on Count 2 of the Information, which charges him with money laundering.

Asad received a sentence of 60 months’ imprisonment. Q Link agreed to pay a forfeiture money judgment of over \$109 million. Asad and Q Link also agreed to jointly paid \$109,637,057 in restitution to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Asad separately paid \$1,758,339.25 in restitution to the United States Small Business Association,

and paid a forfeiture judgment against him of \$17,484,118.00. The paid financial penalties and restitution totaled over \$128 million.

"Issa Asad and his company, Q Link Wireless, deliberately scammed two vital government programs aimed at supporting people and companies in economic distress, wrongfully diverting hundreds of millions of dollars for their personal benefit and gain, all while impeding the government's capacity to assist those who genuinely required the help," stated U.S. Attorney Hayden P. O' Byrne for the Southern District of Florida. "These outcomes underscore our resolve to make sure that those who mastermind corporate fraud schemes face personal consequences."

"IRS Criminal Investigation special agents are specially equipped to follow the complex financial trail left by criminals, and we are dedicated to holding those accountable for crimes committed," said Executive Special Agent in Charge Kareem Carter of the Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation (IRS-CI), Washington, D.C. Field Office. "This was a brazen scheme of staggering proportions. Mr. Asad prioritized his own greed, stealing \$100 million from taxpayers. Today's sentencing sends a clear message that our Global Illicit Financial Team and our law enforcement partners remain vigilant and will vigorously pursue those who attempt to enrich themselves through fraudulent means."

"Q Link and Asad stole funds from a key FCC program meant to serve low-income households," said Inspector General Fara Damelin of the FCC, Office of Inspector General (FCC-OIG). "This sentencing sends an important message that egregious criminal misconduct against FCC programs will not go unanswered. FCC OIG investigators and their law enforcement partners at DOJ, IRS, SIGPR, and USPIA, did an outstanding job on this investigation, and we thank FCC for its assistance. FCC OIG is dedicated to stopping waste, fraud, and abuse, and will continue to vigorously pursue investigations against wrongdoers who defraud FCC programs and victimize our most vulnerable populations."

"Issa Asad used the cover of a legitimate business to line his pockets at the expense of taxpayers and vulnerable communities," said Acting Inspector in Charge Bladimir Rojo of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS), Miami Division. "Today's sentencing reinforces our commitment to protecting our communities and government programs from abuse."

According to court records, the case arose out of the Asad and Q Link's scheme to defraud the FCC's Lifeline program. Lifeline makes basic communications services more affordable for low-income consumers. It provides subscribers a deep discount on qualifying monthly cellphone service, broadband Internet service, or bundled voice-broadband packages purchased from participating telecommunications providers. The discount helps ensure that low-income consumers can afford 21st century connectivity services and the access they provide to jobs, healthcare, and educational resources.

Asad and Q Link agreed that they purposefully conspired to defraud this program. Specifically, beginning as early as 2012 and continuing through at least 2021, Q Link, directed by Asad, cheated the Lifeline program by making repeated false claims for reimbursement, taking and retaining Lifeline funds that it was not entitled to receive, providing false information about its Lifeline customers, and deceiving the FCC about its compliance with program rules. Asad directed these illegal activities and conspired with others to commit the fraud.

Among other things, according to court records, the Asad and Q Link engaged in multiple tricks designed to mislead the FCC about how many people were actually using Q Link's Lifeline phones, and to prevent customers who did not want the phones from ending their relationship with Q Link (which would have prevented Q Link from billing the program for them). Asad and Q Link manufactured non-existent cellphone activity and engaged in coercive marketing techniques to get people to remain Q Link customers. On one occasion, for example, Asad and Q Link devised the following automated script to be played for Q Link customers: "Hello, your Medicaid, Food Stamp and Lifeline benefits are about to get cancelled. To avoid cancelation of these benefits, press 1 now to indicate that you wish to remain enrolled in these government programs. Press 2 if you wish to speak to a representative about your government benefits. To opt out of any future calls, press 3." The Asad and Q Link used this false and threatening script to coerce customers into accepting Lifeline services. In another recorded call in which a similar script was deployed, a customer, who called to cancel due to a non-working cellphone, asked the Q Link customer service representative, "Do you want me to throw it in the garbage?" The representative instructed the customer to "Just make sure you continue to use the device at least once every 30 days."

Upon learning that the FCC was investigating their Lifeline billing, Asad and Q Link created and provided false records to the FCC to conceal the scam and to continue collecting reimbursement. As part of this plan, Asad and Q Link, with the help of others, simply manufactured cellphone activity on behalf of Q Link customers who were not using their cellphones. At no point did Q Link amend past Lifeline claims for customers who were not using their cellphones or return any of the Lifeline payments. Asad and Q Link, together with their co-conspirators, caused a \$109,637,057 loss to the FCC. Asad admitted that he sent over \$50 million in Lifeline funds to bank accounts he and his family member controlled in Jordan.

Meanwhile, Asad defrauded another federal government program, the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), by making false statements about Q Link's business. Congress created the PPP during the Covid-19 pandemic to authorize forgivable loans to small businesses for job retention and certain other expenses. Asad, in Q Link's name, executed a fraudulent scheme to obtain, and keep, PPP proceeds. To further the scheme, Asad made false statements about

Q Link's business, including a false claim that Q Link's Lifeline reimbursements substantially decreased because of the pandemic. Asad then, in 2021, engaged in an unlawful financial transaction involving approximately \$389,000 of those proceeds. Asad spent PPP loan proceeds on a Land Rover payment, his personal Amex card, jewelry, and personal property taxes.

Resolution of this matter makes this the largest criminal matter involving the FCC and the largest criminal plea deal in the history of Southern District of Florida.

U.S. Attorney O' Byrne, acting Inspector in Charge Rojo, Executive Special Agent in Charge Carter, and Inspector General Damelin, made the announcement.

The FCC-OIG, USPIS, IRS-CI's Global Illicit Financial Team, and Special Inspector General for Pandemic Recovery (SIGPR), investigated the case.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Elizabeth Young and John Shipley prosecuted the case.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Joshua Pastor and Mitch Hyman are handling asset forfeiture.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Danielle Croke is handling restitution.

Related court documents and information may be found on the website of the District Court for the Southern District of Florida at [www.flsd.uscourts.gov](http://www.flsd.uscourts.gov) or at <http://pacer.flsd.uscourts.gov>, under case number 24-cr-20363.

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## Topic

**FINANCIAL FRAUD**