

CBS Mornings

01/20/26

7:00:51 a.m. [TEASE]

10 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Exclusive Interview]

KELLY O'GRADY: We talk exclusively with the convicted mastermind of a fraud scheme used to justify the immigration crackdown in Minneapolis.

JONAH KAPLAN [TO BOCK]: Are you a mob boss?

AIMEE BOCK: Absolutely not.

(....)

7:18:40 a.m. [TEASE]

7 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Coming Up; Exclusive Interview]

GAYLE KING: Coming up, A CBS News exclusive interview with the convicted mastermind of a fraud at the center of the immigration controversy in Minneapolis.

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7:25:48 a.m. [TEASE]

9 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Coming Up; Exclusive Interview]

VLADIMIR DUTHIERS: Coming up, a CBS News exclusive. We have a jailhouse interview with the woman who prosecutors say masterminded the biggest Covid-era fraud in the nation.

(....)

7:30:47 a.m.

4 minutes and 50 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Exclusive; Convicted Mastermind of MN Fraud Scheme Speaks Out]

KING: Now to a CBS News exclusive interview with the woman who prosecutors say it was the mastermind of the biggest Covid-era fraud scheme. 44-year-old Aimee Bock is her name. She's not part of the Somali community. Last year, she was convicted of orchestrating a \$250 million

plot to defraud government program to feed hungry kids. She spoke to CBS News Minnesota correspondent Jonah Kaplan who joins us now. Jonah, good morning, We all want to hear what she has to say. Good morning to you.

KAPLAN: Gayle, good morning. As you mentioned, there's been so much focus on the Somali community here in Minnesota because of the widespread fraud and most of the suspects charged and convicted in the schemes, they are from the Somali community. But, as you mentioned, the mastermind, according to prosecutors, federal prosecutors, she is not Somali. And, Aimee Bock, when we spoke to her, it is rare for someone to speak to us in federal custody, but she expressed some regrets and defended her actions. We were allowed one hour to speak with Aimee Bock over a video call from her Minnesota jail cell.

BOCK: Now I can hear you, yes.

KAPLAN: Until she was arrested in 2022, Bock led Feeding Our Future, the now-infamous nonprofit, signed up restaurants and caterers, many from Minnesota's large Somali community, to receive taxpayer money for providing meals to children in need.

BOCK: During Covid, for obvious reasons, parents were allowed to pick up meals, so we suddenly were able to reach more children.

KAPLAN: But prosecutors said it turned into something else, the nation's largest Covid-era fraud with Bock as the mastermind. [TO BOCK] Are you the mastermind of the scheme?

BOCK: Absolutely not. I believe in accountability. If I had done this, I would have pled guilty. I wouldn't have gone to trial. I wouldn't have put my children and my family through what we've been through. I have lost everything.

KAPLAN: While Bock's attorney provided this video showing stacks of food, prosecutors say Bock and the businesses she recruited stole tens of millions of federal dollars, spending it on luxury cars, real estate ventures, and vacations. [CHAMPAGNE BOTTLE POPS]

BOCK: I wish I could go back and do things differently, stop things, catch things. At that point in time, I believed we were doing everything in our power to protect the program.

KAPLAN: But in 2021, Bock sued the state agency that oversaw the meal program, alleging its scrutiny of Somali applicants was "discriminatory." [TO BOCK] How do you think the state officials took that?

BOCK: Nobody wants to be labeled as being racist.

KAPLAN: Minnesota officials told a state watchdog "the threat of legal consequences and negative media attention" intimidated them into easing off.

BOCK: The notion that a state government is paralyzed and has to allow this level of fraud

because they were afraid of what I might do in a lawsuit is preposterous.

SOMALI COMMUNITY LEADER [date N/A]: Welcome, Aimee Bock!

KAPLAN: In Minnesota's large Somali community, one leader called her a modern day robin hood.

BOCK [date N/A]: The community deserves this, the children need this.

KAPLAN: In 2019, the nonprofit submitted \$3 million worth of meal claims. Two years later, it submitted nearly \$200 million. [TO BOCK] All of a sudden, you're cutting \$200 million worth of checks. How do you not see that as major red flags and keep this going?

BOCK: We relied on the state. We told the state, this site is going to operate at this address, this day, this time, and this number of children. The state would then tell us that's approved.

KAPLAN: Prosecutors also accuse Bock of collecting bribes and kickbacks from meal site operators. At trial, they revealed text messages where she compared Feeding Our Future to the mob. [TO BOCK] Are you a mob boss?

BOCK: Absolutely not, no.

KAPLAN [TO BOCK]: Were you personally benefiting from any of it?

BOCK: I collected my salary and that is all that was collected.

KAPLAN [TO BOCK]: Didn't federal agents find gold jewelry, cash in your closet?

BOCK: They found minimal jewelry. I believe it was, like, two pair of earrings, a bracelet, a watch. There was some cash there.

KAPLAN: At trial, Bock took the stand, but the jury didn't buy her story. Within hours, they convicted her on all counts. Last month, a judge ordered her to forfeit \$5 million from the fraud. Minnesota officials have defended their actions, noting that it was state employees who first contacted the FBI about implications in the fraud scheme. So far, 78 defendants connected to Feeding Our Future — remember, just Feeding Our Future — there are other social service schemes at play — they have been charged, and more than 60 pleaded guilty or convicted at trial. Bock herself is awaiting sentencing and she faces decades in prison, Vlad.

DUTHIERS: Alright, Jonah, been covering this story for a long time. As always, excellent reporting, my friend. Thank you very much.