

PRESS RELEASE

Maryland Man Sentenced to 41 Months in Prison for Fraudulently Obtaining More Than \$2 Million in COVID-19 Relief Funds

Thursday, December 14, 2023

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of New Jersey

NEWARK, N.J. – A Maryland man was sentenced today to 41 months in prison for illegally obtaining more than \$2 million in COVID-19 relief funds, U.S. Attorney Philip R. Sellinger announced today.

Mohamed Kamara, 43, of Greenbelt, Maryland, previously pleaded guilty by videoconference before U.S. District Judge Esther Salas to two counts of an indictment charging him with wire fraud and conspiracy to commit wire fraud. Judge Salas imposed the sentence today in Newark federal court.

“The defendant was sentenced today for submitting falsified applications to the government to obtain business loans to which he was not entitled. These relief programs were set up to provide financial help to Americans who were struggling to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. Trying to turn them into a cash machine for personal benefit will only earn you what this defendant got today – a prison sentence.”

U.S. Attorney Philip R. Sellinger

"Criminals have shown over and over again they will find ways to steal money that isn't theirs in times of crisis, like a hurricane, war, and in this case COVID," FBI – Newark Special Agent in Charge James E. Dennehy said. "Kamara admitted he lied when applying for federal loans meant for struggling business owners who were forced to close their doors during the height of the pandemic. Fraudsters should stop assuming with so much red tape, and so much money being offered that they won't get caught. We found Kamara, and we'll continue to find others who thought the same thing."

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

From March 2020 to October 2020, Kamara and others made fraudulent applications to the Small Business Administration (SBA) for Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL) using information belonging to other individuals and entities without their knowledge and consent. They also opened bank accounts using fraudulent documents. Kamara and his conspirators caused the SBA to grant fraudulent applications and send the proceeds of those loans to the fraudulent bank accounts by wire communication. Kamara then deposited or attempted to deposit checks from fraudulent bank accounts into a bank account in his name. Kamara and his conspirators fraudulent EIDL applications caused the SBA to provide more than \$750,000 in EIDLs.

From January 2020 to September 2020, Kamara also submitted fraudulent applications to the state of New Jersey and six other states for unemployment insurance benefits using the names, dates of birth, and/or Social Security numbers of other individuals. The states provided more than \$1 million, including funds to an account Kamara controlled, in response to these fraudulent applications.

In addition to the prison term, Judge Salas sentenced Mohamed to three years of supervised release.

U.S. Attorney Sellinger credited special agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge James E. Dennehy in Newark, and special agents of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, under the direction of Special Agent in Jonathan Mellone in New York, with the investigation leading to the sentencing. He also thanked the FBI Baltimore Field Office; the Small Business Administration, and the New Jersey Department of Labor & Workforce Development for their assistance.

The District of New Jersey COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Strike Force is one of five strike forces established throughout the United States by the U.S. Department of Justice to investigate and prosecute COVID-19 fraud. The strike forces focus on large-scale, multi-state pandemic relief fraud perpetrated by criminal organizations and transnational actors. The strike forces are interagency law enforcement efforts, using prosecutor-led

and data analyst-driven teams designed to identify and bring to justice those who stole pandemic relief funds.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Andrew Kogan of the U.S. Attorney's Office Cybercrime Unit in Newark.

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