

PRESS RELEASE

# Romance Scammer Convicted at Trial of Money Laundering, Wire Fraud Conspiracies

Friday, December 8, 2023

## For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Northern District of Texas

An Aubrey woman was convicted at trial Thursday of defrauding elderly victims in romance schemes, announced U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Texas Leigha Simonton.

After 7 days of trial and 10 hours of deliberation, a jury convicted Ijeoma Okoro, 33, of one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud and one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering.

"I am so proud of the federal agents and our office's prosecutors in this case, who worked diligently to hold the defendants accountable for conspiring to defraud these innocent victims of money and then conspiring to launder that money," said U.S. Attorney Simonton. "Such schemes are especially despicable because the perpetrators prey on the emotions of the people they are victimizing. Our U.S. Attorney's Office will continue to aggressively seek to bring such criminals to justice."

"Ms. Okoro and her coconspirators stole money from retirement accounts, pensions and other sources as part of several romance scams," said Christopher J. Altemus Jr., special agent in charge of the IRS Criminal Investigation's Dallas Field Office. "These individuals preyed on unsuspecting women and men, gaining their trust and confidence, in order to ultimately empty their bank accounts. This verdict should send a clear message to those who would consider conducting or participating in these types of fraudulent financial schemes."

According to evidence presented at trial, the fraudsters assumed fake names and trolled dating sites like Match.com and Zoosk, searching for targets.

Once the fraudsters had ingratiated themselves to their often divorced or widowed victims with promises of long-term commitment, the fraudsters concocted elaborate stories about why they needed financial assistance. A common story was that the fraudster had to travel overseas for work and was unable to access a bank account. To solve a work-related crisis or pay for urgent medical treatment for a family member, the fraudster asked the victims to send money to cover the expenses, promising to repay them in the near future. The trusting victims sent thousands of dollars to bank accounts opened by the defendant and her coconspirators in the Northern District of Texas. The defendant then distributed the fraudulent proceeds to coconspirators and claimed a cut for herself.

The defendant now faces up to 20 years in federal prison on the wire fraud conspiracy count, up to 10 years in federal prison on the money laundering conspiracy count, and an order to repay the victims the losses that she and her coconspirators caused the victims.

IRS – Criminal Investigation led the investigation with assistance from the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Frisco Field Office, Homeland Security Investigations, and Department of Labor Office of Inspector General. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Mary Walters, Jenna Rudoff and Elyse Lyons prosecuted the case.

## **Contact**

Erin Dooley

Public Affairs Officer

214-659-8707

[erin.dooley@usdoj.gov](mailto:erin.dooley@usdoj.gov)

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## **Topic**

**FINANCIAL FRAUD**

## **Components**

[Federal Bureau of Investigation \(FBI\)](#)

[USAO - Texas, Northern](#)