

PRESS RELEASE

Two Convicted of Romance and Pandemic Fraud Schemes

Thursday, June 15, 2023

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Massachusetts

BOSTON – Two Nigerian men were found guilty yesterday by a federal jury in Boston for their roles in expansive online fraud schemes targeting individuals in the United States, including pandemic unemployment assistance fraud, romance scams and other online scams.

Osakpamwan Henry Omoruyi, 37, and Osaretin Godspower Omoruyi, 36, both previously of Canton, were each convicted following an eight-day jury trial of one count of bank fraud, one count of bank fraud conspiracy, and one count of money laundering conspiracy. U.S. District Court Judge Patti B. Saris ordered that the defendants be taken into federal custody pending sentencing, which is scheduled for Sept. 22, 2023. The defendants were charged by criminal complaint in March 2021.

The defendants opened multiple bank accounts in the names of fake people using fraudulent foreign passports. The defendants then used those accounts to receive the proceeds from various frauds perpetrated by their co-conspirators, including pandemic unemployment assistance fraud, romance scams, and other online scams. The majority of the fraud proceeds came from romance scams, which occur when a criminal adopts a fake online identity to gain a victim's affection and trust. The scammer then uses the illusion of a romantic or close relationship to manipulate and steal from the victim. In total, between 2019 and 2021, the defendants received more than \$1.7 million in fraud proceeds and transferred most of the money overseas.

The charges of bank fraud and conspiracy to commit bank provide for a sentence of up to 30 years in prison, five years of supervised release, a fine of up to \$1 million or twice the gross gain or loss, whichever is greater, and forfeiture. The charge of money laundering conspiracy provides for a sentence of up to 20 years in prison, three years of supervised release, a fine of \$500,000, or twice the value of the criminally derived property, whichever is greater, and forfeiture. Sentences are imposed by a federal

district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and statutes which govern the determination of a sentence in a criminal case.

Acting United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy; Christopher DiMenna, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston Division; Jonathan Mellone, Special Agent in Charge of Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General; Michael J. Krol, Acting Special Agent in Charge of Homeland Security Investigations in New England; and Supervisory Special Agent Gregory Batman, Chief of the U.S. Department of State's Diplomatic Security Service, Criminal Investigations Division made the announcement. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Christopher J. Markham and Benjamin A. Saltzman of Levy's Securities, Financial & Cyber Fraud Unit are prosecuting the case.

On May 17, 2021, the Attorney General established the COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Task Force to marshal the resources of the Department of Justice in partnership with agencies across government to enhance efforts to combat and prevent pandemic-related fraud. The Task Force bolsters efforts to investigate and prosecute the most culpable domestic and international criminal actors and assists agencies tasked with administering relief programs to prevent fraud by, among other methods, augmenting and incorporating existing coordination mechanisms, identifying resources and techniques to uncover fraudulent actors and their schemes, and sharing and harnessing information and insights gained from prior enforcement efforts. For more information on the Department's response to the pandemic, please visit

Anyone with information about allegations of attempted fraud involving COVID-19 can report it by calling the Department of Justice's National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) Hotline at 866-720-5721 or via the NCDF Web Complaint Form at: <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form>.

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