

PRESS RELEASE

Three Indicted for Unemployment Insurance Benefits Fraud Conspiracy

Tuesday, October 22, 2024

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of California

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — On Oct. 10, 2024, a federal grand jury returned an eight-count indictment against Ricky Lee Ware, 41; Kimberly Ann Wallace, 28, of Las Vegas, Nevada; and Carlos Lee Sanchez Jr., 44, of Sacramento, charging them with conspiring to commit access device fraud and access device fraud, U.S. Attorney Phillip A. Talbert announced. The indictment also charges Sanchez with an additional count of being a felon in possession of a firearm.

The indictment was unsealed following the arrests of Wallace and Sanchez.

According to court documents, between July 2020 and January 2021, the defendants conspired to obtain debit cards that allowed them to access unemployment benefits. The unemployment benefits were in the names of people who did not know the defendants. The defendants then used the debit cards to withdraw more than \$900,000 in unemployment benefits from ATMs.

According to the indictment, on March 28, 2023, Sanchez possessed a Ruger-57 handgun. Sanchez is prohibited from possessing firearms because he has been convicted of distribution of cocaine.

This case is the product of an investigation by the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General; Homeland Security Investigations; Federal Bureau of Investigation; and Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General. Assistant U.S. Attorney Nicholas M. Fogg is prosecuting the case.

If convicted of the conspiracy, the defendants face a maximum statutory penalty of 7.5 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. If convicted of the access device fraud counts, the defendants face a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. Sanchez, if convicted of being a felon in possession of a firearm, faces a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. Any sentence, however, would be

determined at the discretion of the court after consideration of any applicable statutory factors and the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of variables. The charges are only allegations; the defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

This effort is part of a California COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Strike Force operation, one of five interagency COVID-19 fraud strike force teams established by the U.S. Department of Justice. The California Strike Force combines law enforcement and prosecutorial resources in the Eastern and Central Districts of California and focuses on large-scale, multistate pandemic relief fraud perpetrated by criminal organizations and transnational actors. The strike forces use prosecutor-led and data analyst-driven teams to identify and bring to justice those who stole pandemic relief funds.

Updated October 22, 2024

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