

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Northern District of Texas

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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11 Romance Scammers Charged With Money Laundering, Wire Fraud Conspiracies

A federal grand jury has indicted 11 defendants in the Northern District of Texas for defrauding elderly victims in romance schemes, announced Acting U.S. Attorney Prerak Shah.

The 11 defendants, all arrested during a large-scale operation Wednesday morning, are charged with a variety of financial crimes, including conspiracy to commit wire fraud and conspiracy to launder monetary instruments. The majority of the defendants charged in this investigation have ties to a transnational organized crime syndicate originating in Nigeria, law enforcement revealed Friday.

According to court documents, these defendants allegedly preyed on elderly victims, many of whom were widowed or divorced. They assumed fake names and trolled dating sites like Match.com, ChistianMingle, JSwipe, and PlentyofFish, searching for targets.

Once they had ingratiated themselves with their victims, they allegedly concocted sob-stories about why they needed money – i.e., taxes to release an inheritance, essential overseas travel, crippling debt, etc. – and then siphoned money from victim's accounts, tens of thousands of dollars at a time.

“Crimes like these are especially despicable because they rely not only on victims’ lack of internet savvy, but also, their isolation, their loneliness, and sometimes their grief. As the victims open their hearts, the perpetrators open their wallets,” Acting U.S. Attorney Prerak Shah said at a press conference announcing the charges. “The only mistake these victims make is being generous to the wrong people.”

“The crimes allegedly committed by these defendants hit close to home. Your neighbors, parents, friends and family would be targets of this organization. The fraudsters intimidated and berated their victims, ruined their lives, really, and then disappeared,” said FBI Dallas Special Agent in Charge Matthew J. DeSarno. “We’re confident this investigation will have a significant impact on this region and beyond.”

The indictments unsealed today in the Northern District of Texas complement a [related indictment](#) unsealed in the Eastern District of Texas, which charges 23 defendants (including one also charged in the Northern District of Texas) with a variety of financial crimes.

Those charged in the Northern District of Texas include:

- David Animashaun, 38 – arrested in DFW, charged with wire fraud conspiracy
- Oluwalobamise Michael Moses, 40 – arrested in DFW, charged with wire fraud conspiracy
- Irabor Fatarr Musa, 51 – arrested in the Eastern District of Texas, charged by the Northern District of Texas wire fraud conspiracy, money laundering conspiracy
- Ijeoma Okoro, 31 – arrested in DFW, wire fraud conspiracy fraud, money laundering conspiracy

- Chukwemeka Orji, 36 – arrested in DFW, charged with wire fraud conspiracy, money laundering conspiracy
- Emanuel Stanley Orji, 35 – arrested in DFW, charged with wire fraud conspiracy
- Frederick Orji, 37 – arrested in Dallas, charged with wire fraud conspiracy, money laundering conspiracy
- Uwadiel Esezobor, 36 – arrested in Lubbock, charged with mail & wire fraud conspiracy
- Victor Idowu, 36 – arrested in Los Angeles, charged with mail & wire fraud conspiracy
- Afeez Abiola Alao, 37 – wire fraud conspiracy, money laundering conspiracy
- Ambrose Sunday Ohide, 47 – wire fraud conspiracy

Indictments are merely allegations of criminal conduct, not evidence. Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

If convicted, the defendants face up to 20 years in federal prison on the wire fraud conspiracy counts and up to 10 years in federal prison on the money laundering conspiracy counts.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Dallas Field Office, Homeland Security Investigations, and IRS – Criminal Investigation led the investigation with assistance from the Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the Texas Department of Public Safety, the Texas Rangers, the U.S. Marshals, U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services, and the U.S. Department of State. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Mary Walters, George Leal, and Erica Hilliard are prosecuting the cases for the Northern District of Texas, with assistance from Assistant U.S. Attorneys in the Eastern District of Texas.

The FBI [estimates](#) that more than 20,000 people lost more than \$600 million in romance scams in 2020 alone. For tips on how to protect yourselves and your loved ones, visit the Federal Trade Commission’s romance scam [webpage](#). To report a suspected romance fraud, file a report via the FBI’s Internet Crime Complaint Center at www.ic3.gov.

Topic(s):
Elder Justice
Financial Fraud

Component(s):
[Federal Bureau of Investigation \(FBI\)](#)

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