

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

District of Massachusetts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, May 3, 2021

"John Doe" Charged in Superseding Indictment with Identity Theft and Fraud Related to COVID-19 Pandemic

BOSTON – A Charlestown man whose identity is unknown was charged last week in connection with an alleged scheme to fraudulently claim COVID-19-related unemployment assistance and commit other frauds, all in connection with his use of a stolen identity.

An individual referred to as "John Doe", was charged in a superseding indictment with three counts of wire fraud, one count of false representation of a Social Security number and one count of aggravated identity theft. The original indictment charged Doe with one count of making a false statement in a passport application.

As alleged in the superseding indictment, Doe applied for and received Massachusetts unemployment benefits totaling over \$15,000 using the name and personally identifiable information of a resident of Puerto Rico. Doe allegedly requested that the benefits be paid to a prepaid debit card, which he used for cash withdrawals at ATM machines and for the purchase of goods and services.

The indictment also alleges that Doe used the Social Security number of the Puerto Rican victim on an application for a duplicate driver's license Doe submitted to the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles in 2017.

The charge of wire fraud provides for a sentence of up to 20 years in prison, up to three years of supervised release and a fine of up to \$250,000. The charge of passport fraud provides for a sentence of up to 10 years in prison, up to three years of supervised release and a fine of up to \$250,000. The charge of false representation of a Social Security number provides for a sentence of up to five years in prison, up to three years of supervised release and a fine of \$250,000. The charge of aggravated identity theft provides for two years in prison to be served consecutive to the term for the underlying felony, which in this case is the false representation of a Social Security number. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

The investigation is being conducted by the U.S. Department of State, Diplomatic Security Service together with Homeland Security's Investigation's Document and Benefit Fraud Task Force (DBFTF), a specialized field investigative group comprised of personnel from various local, state, and federal agencies with expertise in detecting, deterring, and disrupting organizations and individuals involved in various types of document, identity, and benefit fraud schemes.

Acting United States Attorney Nathaniel R. Mendell; Matthew F. O'Brien, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Department of State, Diplomatic Security Service; William S. Walker, Acting Special Agent in Charge of Homeland Security Investigations in Boston; and Mikulka Michael, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, Office of Investigations, Labor Racketeering and Fraud made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorneys James D. Herbert of Mendell's Health Care Fraud Unit and Alatheia Porter of Mendell's Narcotics and Money Laundering Unit are prosecuting the case.

The details contained in the charging documents are allegations. The defendant is presumed to be innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

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