

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Southern District of Florida

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, July 27, 2017

Miami Resident Sentenced to 54 Months in Prison For \$1 Million Unemployment Fraud and Identity Theft Scheme

Phyllistone Termine, 19, of Miami, was sentenced today by U.S. District Judge Joan Lenard of the Southern District of Florida, to 54 months in prison, to be followed by 3 years of supervised release, for his role in a scheme that used stolen identities to commit more than one million dollars of unemployment fraud.

Benjamin G. Greenberg, Acting United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, and Rafiq Ahmad, Special Agent in Charge, Atlanta Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General (DOL-OIG), made the announcement.

Termine previously pled guilty to one count of use of one or more unauthorized access devices to obtain anything of value aggregating \$1,000 or more, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1029(a)(2), and one count of aggravated identity theft, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1028A(a)(1).

According to the court documents, law enforcement identified an IP address connected to Termine's residence that was used to access and file fraudulent unemployment benefit claims for more than 800 individuals, totaling \$1,019,859, on the Florida Department of Employment and Opportunity's online database between March 23, 2015, and March 7, 2016.

Part of the investigation that followed, law enforcement executed a search warrant at Termine's residence. Upon entering the home, law enforcement discovered Termine in his bedroom, wearing earbuds and writing his summer 2016 fraud goals on a small notepad. The first line read "Buy 3 Phones, 1 clean 2 dirty's" and "Buy online – Merrick BNK & CCVs." CCVs are numeric fraud-prevention codes on credit cards that are used to help verify possession of your credit card. They can also be purchased from nefarious internet sources, in order for people to obtain stolen credit card data. On the bed next to Termine were three cellular phones and a laptop computer. Hidden between

Termine's mattress and box spring was a black case containing several debit and credit cards belonging to individuals who did not reside at Termine's residence. Inside the black case were several white blank plastic cards with magnetic stripes that are used to make debit and credit cards. On the floor next to Termine's bed was hardware used to encode the magnetic stripe on credit/debit cards.

Several victims whose credit or debit cards were found during the search also had their identities used to file for unemployment benefits using the IP Address at Termine's home. Law enforcement spoke with many of these victims, all of whom confirmed that they had not filed unemployment claims within the last 5 years, did not authorize anyone else to, and did not know Termine nor authorize him to be in possession of their credit cards, debit cards, or other personal identifying information.

Mr. Greenberg commended the investigative efforts of DOL-OIG and the Social Security Administration, Office of Inspector General (SSA-OIG), who provided significant support to this investigation. This case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Anne P. McNamara. Related court documents and information may be found on the website of the District Court for the Southern District of Florida at www.flsd.uscourts.gov or on <http://pacer.flsd.uscourts.gov>.