

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Romance Scammer Sentenced to 3+ Years in Prison

A romance scammer with ties to a Nigerian organized crime syndicate was sentenced today to more than three years in federal prison, announced U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Texas Leigha Simonton.

Frederick Orji, a 38-year-old naturalized U.S. citizen born in Nigeria, was charged alongside 10 co-conspirators in a [large-scale operation](#) led by the FBI in September 2021. He pleaded guilty in June 2022 to conspiracy to commit wire fraud and was sentenced Monday to 37 months in federal prison by Chief U.S. District Judge David Godbey, who also ordered him to pay \$418,030 in restitution to his victims.

According to court documents, Mr. Orji and his co-defendants preyed on elderly victims, many of whom were widowed or divorced. They assumed fake names and trolled dating sites like Match.com and Bumbledate.com, searching for targets.

Once they had ingratiated themselves with their victims, they 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.

In plea papers, Mr. Orji admitted that once he and his conspirators had depleted the victims' accounts of all the funds they were willing and able to send, often emptying their entire savings, the defendants stopped communicating with the victims.

His brother, co-defendant Emanuel Orji, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit wire fraud in September 2022 and is set to be sentenced on Jan. 9, 2023. Five additional defendants are awaiting trial, which is set for March 20, 2023. They are presumed innocent until proven guilty in court.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Dallas Field Office, Homeland Security Investigations' Dallas Field Office, and IRS – Criminal Investigation led the investigation with assistance from the Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services, and the U.S. Department of State's Diplomatic Security Service (DSS). Assistant U.S. Attorneys Mary Walters and Jenna Rudoff are prosecuting the case.

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 \(FBI\)](#)
[USAO - Texas, Northern](#)

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