

Metro-Atlanta Man Charged with Fraud and Money Laundering of COVID-19 Unemployment Funds and IRS Tax Refunds

Friday, February 16, 2024

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Northern District of Georgia

ATLANTA - Nnamdi Iheanacho has been indicted on federal charges of wire fraud, aggravated identity theft, money laundering conspiracy, and concealment money laundering for stealing COVID-19 relief funds and federal tax refunds based on fraud and identity theft.

"Iheanacho allegedly defrauded government funds during the COVID-19 pandemic involving state unemployment insurance funds and tax refunds from the Internal Revenue Service," said U.S. Attorney Ryan K. Buchanan. "COVID-19 pandemic funds provided vital aid for citizens who qualified for them. Congress did not intend for individuals to illegally profit from the CARES Act program. The indictment alleges that Iheanacho compounded his fraudulent conduct by stealing the identities of others to perpetrate his schemes, including filing fraudulent tax returns with the Internal Revenue Service."

"An important part of the mission of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General is to investigate allegations of fraud involving unemployment insurance programs. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to aggressively investigate these types of allegations," said Mathew Broadhurst, Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, Southeast Region.

"Iheanacho's alleged criminal acts deprived the government of funding for its programs and possibly created financial instability for his victims of identity theft," said Demetrius Hardeman, Acting Special Agent in Charge, IRS Criminal Investigation, Atlanta Field Office. "IRS Criminal Investigation special agents and our law enforcement partners are

diligently working to find those who show so much disregard to others in their pursuit of greed.”

“This defendant is charged with taking advantage of our nation during an unprecedented time of a pandemic and stealing money intended to help others who were struggling,” said Keri Farley, Special Agent in Charge of FBI Atlanta. “We are proud to work with our partner agencies to investigate and stamp out these schemes.”

According to U.S. Attorney Buchanan, the charges, and other information presented in court: The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (“CARES”) Act provided emergency assistance for individuals, families, and businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The CARES Act created a new temporary federal program called Pandemic Unemployment Assistance that provided up to 39 weeks of unemployment benefits and funding to states for administration of the program. An individual receiving these benefits might also receive a \$600 weekly benefit in federal funds under the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation program if he or she was eligible for such compensation for the week claimed.

To fraudulently take advantage of the \$600 weekly federal benefit, Nnamdi Iheanacho, 38, of Dacula, Georgia, allegedly applied online for unemployment insurance benefits for numerous individuals using stolen personal identifying information. Simultaneously, Iheanacho allegedly filed federal income tax returns using stolen identity information. He then allegedly laundered the proceeds of his fraud schemes.

Members of the public are reminded that the indictment only contains charges. The defendant is presumed innocent of the charges and it will be the government’s burden to prove the defendant’s guilt beyond a reasonable doubt at trial.

This case is being investigated by the Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Sarah E. Klapman is prosecuting the case.

On May 17, 2021, the Attorney General established the COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Task Force to marshal the resources of the Department of Justice in partnership with agencies across government to enhance efforts to combat and prevent pandemic-related fraud. The Task Force bolsters efforts to investigate and prosecute the most culpable domestic and international criminal actors and assists agencies tasked with administering relief programs to prevent fraud by, among other methods, augmenting and incorporating existing coordination mechanisms, identifying resources and techniques to uncover fraudulent actors and their schemes, and sharing and harnessing

information and insights gained from prior enforcement efforts. For more information on the Department's response to the pandemic, please visit <https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus>

Anyone with information about allegations of attempted fraud involving COVID-19 can report it by calling the Department of Justice's National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) Hotline at 866-720-5721 or via the NCDF Web Complaint Form at: <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form>.

For further information please contact the U.S. Attorney's Public Affairs Office at USAGAN.PressEmails@usdoj.gov or (404) 581-6280. The Internet address for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is <http://www.justice.gov/usao-ndga>.

Updated February 21, 2024

Topic

CORONAVIRUS

Component

[USAO - Georgia, Northern](#)