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IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF GEORGIA
ALBANY DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Case No.

v.

INDICTMENT

Under Seal

TYSHION NAUTESE HICKS,
SHATARA HUBBARD,
TORELLA WYNN,
MACOVIAN DOSTON,
KENYA WHITEHEAD,
A'DARRION ALEXANDER, and
MEMBRISH BROWN,

Violations:

Conspiracy to Commit Mail Fraud
18 U.S.C. § 1349

Aggravated Identity Theft
18 U.S.C. § 1028A

Concealment Money Laundering
18 U.S.C. § 1956(a)(1)(B)(i)

Defendants.

Forfeiture:

18 U.S.C. § 981(a)(1)(C)
18 U.S.C. § 982(a)(1)
28 U.S.C. § 2461

THE GRAND JURY CHARGES:

At all times relevant to this Indictment:

BACKGROUND

Unemployment Insurance and Pandemic Relief Funding

1. Unemployment Insurance ("UI") was a joint state and federal program that provided monetary benefits to eligible beneficiaries. UI payments were intended to provide temporary financial assistance to lawful workers who were unemployed through no fault of their own. Beginning in or around March 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, several federal programs expanded UI eligibility and increased UI benefits,

including through the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program (“PUA”) and Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (“FPUC”).

2. Additionally, between in or around August 2020 and in or around December 2020, the federal government provided grants to all U.S. states and territories from the Disaster Relief Fund managed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (“FEMA”) under the Lost Wages Assistance Program (“LWAP”) to deal with substantial increases in the volume of UI claims resulting from the pandemic.

Georgia Department of Labor

3. The Georgia Department of Labor (“GaDOL”) oversaw and administered the UI program in the State of Georgia. To establish a UI claim, a Georgia claimant must have worked within the state and received minimum wage earnings during a specified base period, which was the specific period used to determine whether the claimant earned enough wages to make a UI claim.

4. A claimant seeking UI benefits in the State of Georgia filed an online application through the GaDOL website, which required the claimant to identify his or her employer and provide his or her wages and base period of employment, as well as Personal Identifying Information (“PII”), including the claimant’s name, date of birth, Social Security number, and address. The GaDOL relied upon the information in these applications to determine UI benefits eligibility.

5. When a UI claim was approved, the GaDOL distributed state and federal UI benefits to the claimant. At the claimant’s option, these benefits could be loaded onto

a debit card issued through the GaDOL and its contracted vendors. The debit card was generally mailed via the U.S. Postal Service to the address provided by the claimant.

6. Once received by a claimant in the mail, a debit card containing UI benefit payments had to be activated with the vendor online or via phone. Once activated, a debit card could be used, like many commercially available debit cards or “prepaid” cards, for retail transactions and to withdraw cash or send cash to others at banks, ATMs, or other money services businesses.

Defendants

7. **TYSHION NAUTESE HICKS** was a resident of Cordele and Vienna, Georgia.

8. **SHATARA HUBBARD** was a resident of Cordele, Georgia, and owned a spa business.

9. **TORELLA WYNN** was a resident of Cordele, Georgia.

10. **MACOVIAN DOSTON** was a resident of Vienna and Davisboro, Georgia.

11. **KENYA WHITEHEAD** was a resident of Cordele, Georgia.

12. **A'DARRION ALEXANDER** was a resident of Cordele, Georgia.

13. **MEMBRISH BROWN** was a resident of Vienna, Georgia.

COUNT ONE
(18 U.S.C. § 1349)
Conspiracy to Commit Mail Fraud

14. The allegations in Paragraphs 1 through 13 of this Indictment are realleged and incorporated here.

15. Beginning in or around March 2020 and continuing until in or around November 2022, in the Middle District of Georgia and elsewhere, Defendants

**TYSHION NAUTESE HICKS,
SHATARA HUBBARD,
TORELLA WYNN,
MACOVIAN DOSTON,
KENYA WHITEHEAD,
A'DARRION ALEXANDER, and
MEMBRISH BROWN**

did knowingly and intentionally, that is, with the intent to advance the conspiracy, knowingly combine, conspire, and agree with each other and others, both known and unknown to the Grand Jury, to commit the offense of mail fraud, to wit: to knowingly, willfully, and with the intent to defraud, having devised and intending to devise a scheme and artifice to defraud, and for obtaining money and property by means of materially false and fraudulent pretenses, representations, and promises, knowing such pretenses, representations, and promises were false and fraudulent when made, place and cause to be placed in a Post Office and authorized depository for mail, a thing to be sent and delivered by the Postal Service and any private or commercial interstate carrier, for the purpose of executing such scheme and artifice, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1349.

Purpose and Object of the Conspiracy

16. The purpose and object of the conspiracy was for Defendants and others to (a) submit and cause to be submitted false and fraudulent UI claims in order to obtain UI benefits to which they were not entitled; and (b) conceal the submission of the false and fraudulent claims, and the existence of the conspiracy, from detection.

Manner and Means

17. The manner and means by which Defendants and their co-conspirators sought to accomplish, and did accomplish, the purpose and object of the conspiracy included but were not limited to the following:

18. As part of the conspiracy, Defendants and their co-conspirators registered multiple fictitious employers with the GaDOL through its website, or “portal,” including but not limited to the following fictitious employers: Mike Towns, Davis Cleaning Service, Lawrence Robinson, Lee D. Grant, Kaptured by Covy, and Torella Wynn.

19. Defendants and their co-conspirators fabricated lists of purported employees for the fictitious companies by compiling fraudulently obtained PII, or PII of some conspirators, to upload or cause to be uploaded to the GaDOL portal accounts associated with the fictitious employers.

20. Defendants and their co-conspirators communicated over social media platforms about how to participate in the scheme, including giving instructions on when and how to access the GaDOL portals.

21. Defendants and their co-conspirators fraudulently obtained PII for use in the conspiracy from a multinational corporation, Georgia-based businesses, and family members. As one example, **TYSHION NAUTESE HICKS** and other co-conspirators paid a relative who was employed at a healthcare and hospital network in Atlanta, Georgia, to unlawfully obtain patients’ PII from the hospital’s databases for the purpose of using the stolen PII as part of the overall conspiracy.

22. Defendants and their co-conspirators exchanged and shared fraudulently obtained PII with each other for the purposes of filing fraudulent UI claims with the GaDOL.

23. Defendants and their co-conspirators used the fraudulently obtained PII, including names and Social Security numbers, to make, and cause to be made, material misrepresentations to GaDOL, including that the victims whose PII was fraudulently obtained (1) were formerly employees of the fictitious employers, and (2) were eligible recipients of the UI benefits claimed.

24. The fraudulent UI claims submitted to GaDOL contained materially false statements and representations, including false employment separation dates and made-up wages of purported employees.

25. Defendants and their co-conspirators provided false information to the GaDOL with the understanding that the GaDOL would rely on the information in the fraudulent claims to approve the payment of UI benefits, and issue debit cards in the names of the purported claimants whose PII had been fraudulently obtained, and their purported fictitious employers, among others.

26. Through their submission of false and fraudulent UI claims, Defendants and their co-conspirators caused these debit cards to be placed into a Post Office and authorized depository for mail and sent and delivered by the Postal Service and private and commercial interstate carriers, to locations in and around Cordele and Vienna, Georgia, accessible to Defendants and other conspirators. For example:

a. Defendants and their co-conspirators caused a debit card ending in 6387 and in the name of F.G. to be mailed to an address on 5th Ave. W. in Cordele, Georgia; and

b. Defendants and their co-conspirators caused a debit card ending in 4651 and in the name of J.H. to be mailed to an address on Whitehall St. in Vienna, Georgia.

27. Defendants obtained debit cards associated with the fictitious employers and based on the fabricated lists of terminated employees, even though Defendants knew they were not entitled to the UI benefits loaded on the debit cards.

28. Defendants and their co-conspirators conducted and caused to be conducted financial transactions with the fraudulent proceeds on the debit cards by initiating money transfers, purchasing money orders from retailers and grocery stores, and withdrawing cash from ATMs.

29. In total, Defendants and their co-conspirators filed and caused to be filed over 5,000 fraudulent UI claims with the GaDOL and stole at least approximately \$30 million of UI benefits meant to help unemployed persons during the COVID-19 pandemic.

All in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1349.

COUNT TWO
(18 U.S.C. § 1028A)
Aggravated Identity Theft

30. The allegations in Paragraphs 1 through 13 and 16 through 29 of this Indictment are realleged and incorporated here.

31. Between on or about February 22, 2021, and on or about March 26, 2021, in the Middle District of Georgia and elsewhere, Defendant

TYSHION NAUTESE HICKS

did knowingly possess and use, without lawful authority, a means of identification of another person, namely, the name, Social Security number, and date of birth of another person, F.G., during and in relation to the felony violation of conspiracy to commit mail fraud, as alleged in Count One of the Indictment.

All in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1028A.

**COUNT THREE
(18 U.S.C. § 1028A)
Aggravated Identity Theft**

32. The allegations in Paragraphs 1 through 13 and 16 through 29 of this Indictment are realleged and incorporated here.

33. Between on or about February 22, 2021, and on or about March 4, 2021, in the Middle District of Georgia and elsewhere, Defendant

MACOVIAN DOSTON

did knowingly possess and use, without lawful authority, a means of identification of another person, namely, the name, Social Security number, and date of birth of another person, J.H., during and in relation to the felony violation of conspiracy to commit mail fraud, as alleged in Count One of the Indictment.

All in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1028A.

COUNT FOUR
(18 U.S.C. § 1956(a)(1)(B)(i))
Concealment Money Laundering

34. The allegations in Paragraphs 1 through 13 and 16 through 29 of this Indictment are realleged and incorporated here.

35. On or about the dates below, in the Middle District of Georgia and elsewhere, Defendant

A'DARRION ALEXANDER

knowingly conducted and attempted to conduct financial transactions affecting interstate and foreign commerce, which involved the proceeds of specified unlawful activity, that is, conspiracy to commit mail fraud as alleged in Count One, and knowing that the transactions were designed in whole or in part to conceal and disguise the nature, location, source, ownership, and control of the proceeds of specified unlawful activity, and that while conducting and attempting to conduct such financial transactions, knew that the property involved in the financial transactions represented the proceeds of some form of unlawful activity.

36. Defendant conducted and caused to be conducted money transfers of the proceeds, including but not limited to the following:

a. On or about July 31, 2021, **A'DARRION ALEXANDER** used a debit card in the name of M.H. ending in 0286 containing proceeds of the specified unlawful activity to purchase a money order ending in 9296 in the amount of \$500.00 at a Publix grocery store in Atlanta, Georgia;

b. On or about July 31, 2021, **A'DARRION ALEXANDER** cashed the Publix money order ending in 9296 for \$450.00, paying \$50.00 in fees, at a money services business in College Park, Georgia;

c. On or about July 31, 2021, **A'DARRION ALEXANDER** used a debit card in the name of M.H. ending in 0286 containing proceeds of the specified unlawful activity to purchase a money order ending in 9297 in the amount of \$400.00 at a Publix grocery store in Atlanta, Georgia; and

d. On or about July 31, 2021, **A'DARRION ALEXANDER** cashed the Publix money order ending in 9297 for \$360.00, paying \$40.00 in fees, at a money services business in College Park, Georgia.

All in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1956(a)(1)(B)(i).

FORFEITURE NOTICE

The Grand Jury further alleges that:

1. Upon conviction of the offense(s) in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1349, in connection with Title 18, United States Code, Section 1341 set forth in Count One; Title 18, United States Code, Section 1028A set forth in Counts Two and Three; and/or Title 18, United States Code, Section 1956(a)(1)(B)(i) set forth in Count Four, as alleged in this Indictment, the defendant(s),

**TYSHION NAUTESSE HICKS
SHATARA HUBBARD,
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shall forfeit to the United States, pursuant to Title 18, United States Code, Section 981(a)(1)(C) and Title 28, United States Code, Section 2461(c), any property, real or personal, which constitutes or is derived from proceeds traceable to said violation(s), or a conspiracy to commit such offense; and/or any property, real or personal, involved in such offense(s), or any property traceable to such property, pursuant to Title 18, United States Code, Section 982(a)(1), including, but not limited to, a personal money judgment in an amount to be determined.

2. If any of the property described above, as a result of any act or omission of the defendant(s):

- a. cannot be located upon the exercise of due diligence;
- b. has been transferred or sold to, or deposited with, a third party;
- c. has been placed beyond the jurisdiction of the court;
- d. has been substantially diminished in value; or
- e. has been commingled with other property that cannot be divided without difficulty,

the United States of America shall be entitled to forfeiture of substitute property, pursuant to Title 21, United States Code, Section 853(p), as incorporated by Title 18, United States Code, Section 982(b)(1) and Title 28, United States Code, Section 2461(c), through Title 18, United States Code, Section 981(a)(1)(C).

All pursuant to Title 18, United States Code, Section 981(a)(1)(C), Title 18, United States Code, Section 982, Title 28, United States Code, Section 2461(c), and Rule 32.2 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure.

A TRUE BILL.

/s/Foreperson of the Grand Jury
FOREPERSON OF THE GRAND JURY

PRESENTED BY:

Glenn S. Leon
Chief, Fraud Section
U.S. Department of Justice

Peter D. Leary
United States Attorney
Middle District of Georgia

By: 

Lyndie Freeman
Trial Attorney

Matthew Kahn
Trial Attorney

Siji Moore
Trial Attorney

Filed in open court this 8 day of November 2022.



Deputy Clerk