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At times relevant to this Indictment:

FILED CLERK, U.S. DISTRICT COURT 6/11/2025 CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA ASI DEPUTY

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

October 2024 Grand Jury

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff,

v.

BETZABE WINTERMUTE, aka "Betsy Wintermute," and SARKIS BOLISAJIAN,

Defendants.

CR 2:25-cr-00460-ODW

I N D I C T M E N T

[18 U.S.C. § 1349: Conspiracy to Commit Health Care Fraud; 18 U.S.C. § 1347: Health Care Fraud; 18 U.S.C. § 1035: False Statements Relating to Health Care Matters; 18 U.S.C. § 371: Conspiracy; 42 U.S.C. § 1320a-7b(b)(1)(A): Soliciting and Receiving Illegal Remunerations for Health Care Referrals; 18 U.S.C. § 1518: Obstruction of Criminal Investigations of Health Care Offenses; 18 U.S.C. \$\$ 981(a)(1)(C), 982, and 28 U.S.C. § 2461(c): Criminal Forfeiturel

The Grand Jury charges:

COUNT ONE

[18 U.S.C. § 1349]

[Defendants WINTERMUTE and BOLISAJIAN]

INTRODUCTORY ALLEGATIONS

Individuals

- 1. Defendant BETZABE WINTERMUTE, also known as "Betsy Wintermute," was a resident of Los Angeles County.
- 2. Defendant SARKIS BOLISAJIAN was a resident of Ventura County. Defendant BOLISAJIAN was an internal medicine physician licensed to practice in California.
 - 3. Co-Conspirator 1 was a resident of Los Angeles County.
- 4. Co-Conspirator 2 was a resident of Los Angeles County. Co-Conspirator 2 was a physician licensed in California.

Entities

- 5. Carmona's Care, Inc. ("Carmona's Care") was a marketing company operated by defendant WINTERMUTE.
- 6. Burbank Hospice Care Services, Inc. ("Burbank Hospice") was a hospice located at 16909 Parthenia Street, Suite 103, Northridge, California.
- 7. Community Hospice Care, LLC ("Community Hospice") was a hospice located at 16909 Parthenia Street, Suite 103B, Northridge, California.
- 8. Silver Age Hospice Service, Inc. ("Silver Age Hospice") was a hospice located at 2500 East Foothill Boulevard, Pasadena, California.
- 9. Prominent Hospice Care Group, Inc. ("Prominent Hospice") was a hospice located at 4605 Lankershim Boulevard, North Hollywood, California.
- 10. Avme Hospice Care ("Avme Hospice") was a hospice located at 18747 Sherman Way, Reseda, California.
- 11. CareMax Hospice was a hospice located at 1015 East Broadway, Glendale, California.

- 12. MGA Home Care Services, Inc. ("MGA Services") was a hospice located at 16921 Parthenia Street, Suite 203B, Northridge, California.
- 13. Co-Conspirator 1 owned and/or controlled Burbank Hospice, Community Hospice, Silver Age Hospice, Prominent Hospice, Avme Hospice, CareMax Hospice, and MGA Services (collectively, the "Los Angeles County Hospices").
- 14. From at least in or around August 2020 to December 2021, defendant BOLISAJIAN was the medical director for Burbank Hospice and Community Hospice.

The Medicare Program

- 15. Medicare was a federal health care benefit program, affecting commerce, that provided benefits to individuals who were 65 years and older or disabled. Medicare was administered by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services ("CMS"), a federal agency under the United States Department of Health and Human Services.
- 16. Medicare was a "health care benefit program" as defined by Title 18, United States Code, Section 24(b) and a "Federal health care program" as defined by Title 42, United States Code, Section 1320a-7b(f).
- 17. Individuals who qualified for Medicare benefits were referred to as Medicare "beneficiaries."
- 18. Hospices, physicians, and other health care providers who provided services to beneficiaries that were reimbursed by Medicare were referred to as "providers."
- 19. To be eligible to participate in Medicare, Medicare required prospective providers to be licensed by a state or

local agency. After obtaining the applicable license, Medicare required prospective providers to submit an application in which the prospective provider agreed to: (a) comply with all Medicare-related laws and regulations, including the Anti-Kickback Statute, 42 U.S.C. § 1320a-7b(b), which prohibits the offering, paying, soliciting, or receiving of any remuneration for the referral of Medicare beneficiaries; and (b) not submit claims for payment to Medicare knowing they were false or fraudulent or with deliberate ignorance or reckless disregard of their truth or falsity. If Medicare approved the application, Medicare assigned the provider an identifying number, which enabled the provider to submit claims to Medicare beneficiaries.

20. Most providers submitted their claims electronically pursuant to an agreement with Medicare that they would submit claims that were accurate, complete, and truthful.

Hospice Services

- 21. To qualify for reimbursement for hospice services,
 Medicare required: (a) a physician to certify that the
 beneficiary was terminally ill; and (b) the beneficiary to sign
 an election form statement choosing hospice care instead of
 other Medicare benefits. Medicare considered a beneficiary to
 be "terminally ill" if the beneficiary's life expectancy was six
 months or less if the beneficiary's illness ran its normal
 course.
- 22. Hospice services reimbursed by Medicare were palliative in nature and included, but were not limited to,

medications to manage pain symptoms, necessary medical equipment, and bereavement services to surviving family members.

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- 23. Once a beneficiary elected to receive hospice care, Medicare would not cover treatment intended to cure the beneficiary's terminal illness. The election form was required to include an acknowledgement that the beneficiary has been given a full understanding of hospice care, including the palliative rather than curative nature of treatment, and an acknowledgement that the beneficiary understood that certain Medicare services were waived by the election.
- If a beneficiary qualified, Medicare covered hospice services for two 90-day periods and, thereafter, additional 60day periods. At the start of the first 90-day period, the beneficiary's attending physician (if the beneficiary had one) and a physician at the hospice were required to certify in writing that the patient was terminally ill with a life expectancy of six months or less if the terminal illness ran its normal course. After the second 90-day period, for the beneficiary to continue to receive hospice benefits, Medicare required that a physician re-certify that the beneficiary was terminally ill and include clinic findings or other documentation supporting the diagnosis of terminal illness. re-certifications, Medicare also required a hospice physician or hospice nurse practitioner to have met with the beneficiary in person and have conducted a face-to-face evaluation before signing a certification of terminal illness.
- 25. Medicare was divided into different program "parts":
 Part A, Part B, Part C, and Part D. Medicare covered hospice

services for those beneficiaries who were eligible for Medicare Part A (hospital-related services). When a Medicare beneficiary elected hospice coverage, the beneficiary waived all rights to Medicare Part B (covering outpatient physician services and procedures) coverage of services to treat or reverse the beneficiary's terminal illness while the beneficiary was on hospice.

B. THE OBJECT OF THE CONSPIRACY

26. Beginning no later than in or around August 2020, and continuing to at least in or around December 2021, in Los Angeles County, within the Central District of California, and elsewhere, defendants WINTERMUTE and BOLISAJIAN knowingly conspired with each other, Co-Conspirator 1, Co-Conspirator 2, and others known and unknown to the Grand Jury, to commit health care fraud, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1347.

C. THE MANNER AND MEANS OF THE CONSPIRACY

- 27. The object of the conspiracy was carried out, and to be carried out, in substance as follows:
- a. Defendant WINTERMUTE would recruit Medicare beneficiaries by deceptively advertising and causing others to advertise Carmona's Care as a caregiving service for Medicare beneficiaries. In fact, Carmona's Care was a marketing company focused on the referral of Medicare beneficiaries to hospice companies in exchange for illegal kickbacks.
- b. Defendant WINTERMUTE would solicit and receive illegal kickbacks from Co-Conspirator 1 and others known and unknown to the Grand Jury in exchange for the referral of the

recruited Medicare beneficiaries to the Los Angeles County
Hospices for purported hospice services. Defendant WINTERMUTE
received approximately \$3,000 in illegal kickbacks per
beneficiary for the first month and approximately \$1,000-\$1,500
for every month thereafter that a referred beneficiary received
purported hospice services that were billed to Medicare by the
Los Angeles County Hospices.

- c. Defendant WINTERMUTE would conceal and disguise the illegal kickbacks by soliciting and receiving the kickbacks in the form of checks to her company, Carmona's Care, that were purportedly written for bona fide services.
- d. Defendant WINTERMUTE would further conceal and disguise the illegal kickbacks by creating invoices that falsely listed fees purportedly for providing translation services and nursing referrals, when in fact the fees were for referrals on a per-patient basis.
- e. Defendant WINTERMUTE would provide Co-Conspirator 2 with a list of beneficiaries who did not qualify for hospice care along with false diagnoses of terminal illness for those beneficiaries. Co-Conspirator 2 would then write referrals for hospice using the false diagnoses provided by defendant WINTERMUTE, without Co-Conspirator 2 ever personally evaluating or communicating with the beneficiaries or reviewing any medical records associated with the beneficiaries. Co-Conspirator 2 would write the false diagnoses of terminal illness on prescription forms that Co-Conspirator 2 also signed, referring the beneficiaries for hospice. Defendant WINTERMUTE would pay Co-Conspirator 2 illegal kickbacks for the fraudulent referrals.

f. As defendant WINTERMUTE knew and intended, the patients she referred to the Los Angeles County Hospices would not be told they were on hospice. In fact, defendant WINTERMUTE would instruct and cause others to instruct Medicare beneficiaries to sign hospice enrollment forms without explaining what the beneficiaries were signing.

- g. Defendants WINTERMUTE and BOLISAJIAN, together with others known and unknown to the Grand Jury, would cause the Medicare beneficiaries she referred to the Los Angeles County Hospices to remain in hospice care, even though, as defendant WINTERMUTE well knew, the services were medically unnecessary and the beneficiaries were not terminally ill. As such, Co-Conspirator 1 and others known and unknown to the grand jury continued to bill Medicare for the beneficiaries and defendant WINTERMUTE continued to receive illegal kickbacks in exchange for the patient referrals.
- h. Defendant BOLISAJIAN would falsely recertify patients recruited by defendant WINTERMUTE as terminally ill, when in fact the patients were not terminally ill.
- i. Defendant BOLISAJIAN would also refer Medicare beneficiaries for hospice services that were medically unnecessary to Burbank Hospice and Community Hospice, where defendant BOLISAJIAN was the medical director.
- j. Defendant BOLISAJIAN would falsely certify and recertify Medicare beneficiaries he referred to Burbank Hospice and Community Hospice as terminally ill and make false diagnoses of terminal illness, when in fact the beneficiaries were not terminally ill.

- k. As defendant WINTERMUTE and others knew and intended, the Los Angeles County Hospices would not provide medically necessary services to the beneficiaries referred by defendant WINTERMUTE.
- 1. As a result of the conspiracy, between in or around August 2020 and in or around January 2024, defendants WINTERMUTE and BOLISAJIAN, along with Co-Conspirator 1, Co-Conspirator 2, and others known and unknown to the Grand Jury, would cause the Los Angeles County Hospices to submit false and fraudulent claims to Medicare for purported hospice services that were procured by the payment of illegal kickbacks, medically unnecessary, not provided, and otherwise ineligible for reimbursement, including:
- i. Between in or around August 2020 and in or around April 2023, over approximately \$4 million in false and fraudulent claims for services purportedly provided to beneficiaries referred by defendant WINTERMUTE, of which approximately \$3.3 million was paid by Medicare to the Los Angeles County Hospices; and
- ii. Between in or around August 2020 and in or around January 2024, over approximately \$6.9 million in false and fraudulent claims identifying defendant BOLISAJIAN as the attending physician, of which approximately \$5.5 million was paid by Medicare to the Los Angeles County Hospices.

COUNTS TWO THROUGH FIVE

[18 U.S.C. §§ 1347, 2]

[Defendants WINTERMUTE and BOLISAJIAN]

28. The Grand Jury realleges paragraphs 1 through 25 and 27 of this Indictment here.

A. THE SCHEME TO DEFRAUD

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Beginning no later than in or around August 2020, and continuing to at least in or around December 2021, in Los Angeles County, within the Central District of California, and elsewhere, defendants WINTERMUTE and BOLISAJIAN, together with Co-Conspirator 1, Co-Conspirator 2, and others known and unknown to the Grand Jury, each aiding and abetting one another, knowingly, willfully, and with intent to defraud, executed and willfully caused to be executed a scheme and artifice: (a) to defraud Medicare, a health care benefit program, as to material matters in connection with the delivery of and payment for health care benefits, items, and services; and (b) to obtain money from Medicare, a health care benefit program, by means of materially false and fraudulent pretenses, representations, and promises and the concealment of material facts in connection with the delivery of and payment for health care benefits, items, and services.

B. MEANS TO ACCOMPLISH THE SCHEME TO DEFRAUD

30. The fraudulent scheme operated, in substance, as described in paragraph 27 of this Indictment.

C. EXECUTIONS OF THE FRAUDULENT SCHEME

31. On or about the dates set forth below, in Los Angeles County, within the Central District of California, and

elsewhere, defendants WINTERMUTE and BOLISAJIAN, together with Co-Conspirator 1, Co-Conspirator 2, and others known and unknown to the Grand Jury, each aiding and abetting one another, knowingly and willfully executed and willfully caused to be executed the fraudulent scheme described above by submitting and causing to be submitted the following false and fraudulent claims for purported hospice care:

COUNT	DEFENDANT	HOSPICE	BENEF- ICIARY	CLAIM NUMBER	DATE CLAIM SUBMITTED	APPROX. AMOUNT BILLED
TWO	WINTERMUTE	Burbank Hospice	M.R.	221187 045036 07CAR	7/6/2021	\$7,259.40
THREE	WINTERMUTE BOLISAJIAN	Burbank Hospice	R.R.	221250 005913 07CAR	9/7/2021	\$5,737.80
FOUR	BOLISAJIAN	Burbank Hospice	A.R.	223010 000021 08CAR	5/3/2021	\$6,194.28
FIVE	BOLISAJIAN	Burbank Hospice	J.B.	221062 012440 07CAR	6/2/2021	\$5,929.06

COUNTS SIX THROUGH EIGHT

[18 U.S.C. §§ 1035, 2]

[Defendant BOLISAJIAN]

32. The Grand Jury realleges paragraphs 1 through 25 of this Indictment here.

33. On or about the following dates, in Los Angeles
County, within the Central District of California, and
elsewhere, defendant BOLISAJIAN, together with others known and
unknown to the Grand Jury, each aiding and abetting one another,
knowingly and willfully made, and willfully caused others to
make, the following materially false, fictitious, and fraudulent
statements and representations, and made and used, and willfully
caused others to make and use, the following materially false
writings and documents knowing the same to contain a materially
false, fictitious, and fraudulent statement and entry, in
connection with the delivery of and payment for health care
benefits, items, and services involving a health care benefit
program, namely, Medicare:

COUNT	BENEFI- CIARY	FALSE STATEMENT	DATE
SIX	J.B.	Certification of a terminal illness, "chronic back pain [and] opioid dependency," for Medicare beneficiary J.B.	2/10/2021
SEVEN	R.R.	Recertification of a terminal illness, "CVA" [cerebrovascular accident], for Medicare beneficiary R.R.	8/13/2021
EIGHT	A.R.	Recertification of a terminal illness, "HIV," for Medicare beneficiary A.R.	10/7/2021

COUNT NINE

[18 U.S.C. § 371]

[Defendant WINTERMUTE]

34. The Grand Jury realleges paragraphs 1 through 25 of this Indictment here.

A. OBJECTS OF THE CONSPIRACY

- 35. Beginning no later than in or around August 2020, and continuing to at least in or around December 2021, in Los Angeles County, within the Central District of California, and elsewhere, defendant WINTERMUTE knowingly conspired with Co-Conspirator 1 and others known and unknown to the Grand Jury to commit the following offenses against the United States:
- a. To knowingly and willfully solicit and receive any remuneration in return for referring an individual to a person for the furnishing and arranging for the furnishing of any item and service for which payment may be made in whole and in part under a Federal health care program, in violation of Title 42, United States Code, Section 1320a-7b(b)(1)(A); and
- b. To knowingly and willfully offer and pay any remuneration to any person to induce such person to refer an individual to a person for the furnishing and arranging for the furnishing of any item and service for which payment may be made in whole and in part under a Federal health care program, in violation of Title 42, United States Code, Section 1320a-7b(b)(2)(A).

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B. THE MANNER AND MEANS OF THE CONSPIRACY

36. The objects of the conspiracy were carried out, and to be carried out, in substance, as set forth in subparagraphs 27(a)-(e), (g), and (1) of this Indictment.

C. OVERT ACTS

37. On or about the following dates, in furtherance of the conspiracy and to accomplish its objects, defendant WINTERMUTE, Co-Conspirator 1, and others known and unknown to the Grand Jury, committed and willfully caused others to commit the following overt acts, among others, within the Central District of California and elsewhere:

Overt Act No. 1: On June 21, 2021, defendant WINTERMUTE, through Carmona's Care, sent invoice no. 123509 to Co-Conspirator 1 requesting payment of \$21,500 in exchange for referring Medicare beneficiaries for hospice services, including Medicare beneficiaries M.R. and R.R.

Overt Act No. 2: On June 23, 2021, Co-Conspirator 1 wrote a check to Carmona's Care for \$21,000, with memo line "invoice no. 125309."

Overt Act No. 3: On July 21, 2021, defendant WINTERMUTE, through Carmona's Care, sent invoice no. 125322 to Co-Conspirator 1 requesting payment of \$20,000 in exchange for referring Medicare beneficiaries for hospice services, including Medicare beneficiaries M.R. and R.R.

Overt Act. No. 4: On July 23, 2021, Co-Conspirator 1 wrote a check to Carmona's Care for \$20,000, with memo line "invoice no. 125322."

COUNTS TEN THROUGH TWELVE

[42 U.S.C. § 1320a-7b(b)(1)(A); 18 U.S.C. § 2]

[Defendant WINTERMUTE]

- 38. The Grand Jury realleges paragraphs 1 through 25 of this Indictment here.
- 39. Hospice 1 was a hospice clinic located in Long Beach,
 California. Hospice 1 was owned and operated by Individual 1.

 Defendant WINTERMUTE solicited and received remuneration from
 Individual 1 in exchange for referring Medicare beneficiaries to
 Hospice 1.
- 40. On or about the dates set forth below, in Los Angeles County, within the Central District of California, and elsewhere, defendant WINTERMUTE, together with others known and unknown to the Grand Jury, aiding and abetting one another, knowingly and willfully solicited and received remuneration, namely, the following payments, which constituted illegal kickbacks, in return for referring Medicare beneficiaries for hospice services, for which payment could be made in whole and in part under a Federal health care program, namely, Medicare, as follows:

COUNT	DATE	PAYMENT	APPROX. AMOUNT
TEN	6/23/21	Payment from Co-Conspirator 1 to defendant WINTERMUTE in the form of Check no. 1557 written from Wells Fargo Bank account ending in 4565 in the name of Burbank Hospice to Carmona's Care.	\$21,000
ELEVEN	7/23/21	Payment from Co-Conspirator 1 to defendant WINTERMUTE in the form of Check no. 1558 written from Wells Fargo account ending in 4565 in the name of Burbank Hospice to Carmona's Care.	\$20,000

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COUNT	DATE	PAYMENT	APPROX. AMOUNT
TWELVE	11/17/21	Payment from Individual 1 to defendant WINTERMUTE in the form of Check no. 1081 written from JPMorgan Chase Bank account ending in 7665 in the name of Hospice 1 to Carmona's Care.	\$20,500

COUNTS THIRTEEN AND FOURTEEN

[18 U.S.C. §§ 1518, 2]

[Defendant WINTERMUTE]

- 41. The Grand Jury realleges paragraphs 1 through 25 and 39 of this Indictment here.
- 42. On or about February 22, 2022, in Los Angeles County, within the Central District of California, and elsewhere, defendant WINTERMUTE, together with others known and unknown to the Grand Jury, aiding and abetting one other, willfully attempted to prevent, obstruct, mislead, and delay the communication of information and records relating to a violation of a Federal health care offense to a criminal investigator by providing and causing to be provided in response to a grand jury subpoena issued as a part of a criminal investigation into Federal health care offenses the following false invoices:

COUNT	ENTRY
THIRTEEN	An invoice numbered 125349 dated on or about August 31, 2021, from Carmona's Care to Hospice 1 purportedly for providing translation services and nursing referrals when in truth and fact, as defendant WINTERMUTE then well knew, the requested payment was for the referral of Medicare beneficiaries to Hospice 1.
FOURTEEN	An invoice numbered 125350 dated on or about September 30, 2021, from Carmona's Care to Hospice 1 purportedly for providing translation services and nursing referrals when in truth and fact, as defendant WINTERMUTE then well knew, the requested payment was for the referral of Medicare beneficiaries to Hospice 1.

FORFEITURE ALLEGATION ONE

[18 U.S.C. § 981(a)(1)(C) and 28 U.S.C. § 2461(c)]

- 1. Pursuant to Rule 32.2 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, notice is hereby given that the United States of America will seek forfeiture as part of any sentence, pursuant to Title 18, United States Code, Section 981(a)(1)(C) and Title 28, United States Code, Section 2461(c), in the event of any defendant's conviction of the offenses set forth in any of Counts One or Nine of this Indictment.
- 2. Any defendant so convicted shall forfeit to the United States of America the following:
- (a) all right, title, and interest in any and all property, real or personal, constituting, or derived from, any proceeds traceable to the offenses; and
- (b) To the extent such property is not available for forfeiture, a sum of money equal to the total value of the property described in subparagraph (a).
- 3. Pursuant to Title 21, United States Code, Section 853(p), as incorporated by Title 28, United States Code, Section 2461(c), any defendant, if so convicted, shall forfeit substitute property, up to the value of the property described in the preceding paragraph if, as the result of any act or omission of the defendant, the property described in the preceding paragraph or any portion thereof (a) cannot be located upon the exercise of due diligence;

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(b) has been transferred, 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.

FORFEITURE ALLEGATION TWO

[18 U.S.C. § 982]

- 1. Pursuant to Rule 32.2(a), Fed. R. Crim. P., notice is hereby given that the United States will seek forfeiture as part of any sentence, pursuant to Title 18, United States Code, Section 982(a)(7), in the event of any defendant's conviction of the offenses set forth in any of Counts Two through Eight, and Ten through Fourteen of this Indictment.
- 2. Any defendant so convicted shall forfeit to the United States of America the following:
- (a) All right, title, and interest in any and all property, real or personal, that constitutes or is derived, directly or indirectly, from the gross proceeds traceable to the commission of any offense of conviction; and
- (b) To the extent such property is not available for forfeiture, a sum of money equal to the total value of the property described in subparagraph (a).
- 3. Pursuant to Title 21, United States Code, Section 853(p), as incorporated by Title 18, United States Code, Section 982(b), any defendant so convicted shall forfeit substitute property, up to the total value of the property described in the preceding paragraph if, as a result of any act or omission of said defendant, the property described in the preceding paragraph, or any portion thereof (a) cannot be located upon the exercise of due diligence;

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(b) has been transferred, 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. A TRUE BILL Foreperson BILAL A. ESSAYLI United States Attorney Christina Shy CHRISTINA T. SHAY Assistant United States Attorney Chief, Criminal Division KRISTEN A. WILLIAMS Assistant United States Attorney Chief, Major Frauds Section LORINDA LARYEA Acting Chief, Fraud Section U.S. Department of Justice SANDOR A. CALLAHAN Trial Attorney, Fraud Section United States Department of Justice