

Case Summary:

The defendants operated a bogus computer technical support company. Victims would obtain the toll-free number for the phony service through either (1) a pop-up advertisement that would appear on the victim's computer, or (2) through an Internet search for technical support services. Victims' calls would be routed to a call center in India, where an individual posing as a technical support technician would obtain remote access to their computers and falsely inform the victims that their computers had been targeted by hackers and/or had been infected with malware. The phony technician would then pretend to perform repairs and/or install unneeded computer programs. The victim would be billed between \$300 and \$1,500 for the bogus work performed, and would be instructed to send payment, either by U.S. Postal Service or FedEx, to an address inside the United States. Upon receipt of the payments, defendants inside the United States would send the money to defendants in India.

Court Dates:

Trial Date: The trial in this matter is currently scheduled for May 5, 2020 at 9am in the Howard H. Baker Federal Courthouse located at 800 Market Street Knoxville, TN in Courtroom 4 before District Court Judge Thomas Varlan.

Status Hearing (Pre-Trial Conference): All defendants are scheduled for a Status/Pre-Trial Conference on April 21, 2020, at 1:30pm in Courtroom 3A before Magistrate Judge Bruce Guyton.

Arraignment: Defendant Ankur Khemani is scheduled for an arraignment March 17, 2020 at 2:30 pm. Defendant Gaurav Bhasin is scheduled for an arraignment March 12, 2020 at 10am. Defendants Marilyn Sterk, Jennifer Sterk, and Teresa Sterk VanBaale are scheduled for an arraignment March 9, 2020 at 1:30pm. All arraignments will be held in the Howard H. Baker Federal Courthouse located at 800 Market Street Knoxville, TN in Courtroom 3A before Magistrate Judge Bruce Guyton.

Indictment: On February 19, 2020, a federal grand jury returned a two count indictment.

Custody Status:

Currently, defendants Marilyn Sterk, Jennifer Sterk, Teresa Sterk VanBaale, and Gaurav Bhasin are not in custody. Following their arraignments, the defendants were released from custody with conditions of reporting to the United States Probation Office. Defendant Ankur Khemani is currently in custody.

Resources:

Eastern District of Tennessee Victim Witness Program Information:

<https://www.justice.gov/usao-edtn/victim-witness-assistance> (Since this website has all the pamphlets for our district, and to minimize victims potentially calling mine and Amy's direct lines, I am not going to link our Victim Assistance Pamphlet like the sample website)

Justice Department Large Case information: <https://www.justice.gov/largecases>

Press Releases:

<https://www.justice.gov/usao-edtn/pr>

Court Documents:



Khemani sealed
Indictment.pdf

Contact Information:

You may also obtain current information about this case on the VNS website at

<https://www.notify.usdoj.gov> or from the VNS Call Center at 1-866-DOJ-4YOU (1-866-365-4968) (TDD/TTY: 1-866-228-4619) (International: 1-502-213-2767).

Please do not call the U.S. Attorney's Office as we do not have the personnel resources to manage high volumes of calls.

The public is reminded that an indictment contains only charges and is not evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent and are entitled to a fair trial at which the government has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

US v. Khemani, et. al. 3:20-CR-18

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. How was I identified as a victim?

Through the investigation, FBI learned how payments were sent to individuals in the US. FBI identified where payments were being sent and as a result were able to identify you as a victim.

2. I don't recognize these defendants. What other names would they be known as? How else would I know them?

Individuals were part of a large tech fraud scheme, therefore individual names were not likely utilized and/or identified. The name of the tech fraud companies identified were as follows:

Azure Support
Cloudcomm Technologies
IDT Info Solutions
Tech Crew
AGA Tech Experts
Geek Tech Support
Alignteq
M&A Tech
Toler Tech
Tydan Tech
Deltron Support

- 3. How did they get my information and/or money from me? When?** See case summary. The scam was in operation 2014 through 2018.
- 4. Will I get my money back?** If the defendants are ordered by the Court to pay restitution at the time of sentencing. Payments are made by the defendants to the Clerk of the Court. The Clerk of the Court will disperse money to victims. Certain factors may affect a defendant's ability to pay restitution. Those factors may include, length of incarceration, availability of funds and other financial circumstances.
- 5. How could this affect my credit?** Your financial institution or bank may have informed you of the breach of your account information. The bank would have given you information about what action to take to protect your credit. The important thing is to keep a close watch on your bank account statements and credit card bills to see if there is a discrepancy in your records or if you notice something suspicious. You can use annualcreditreport.com to see if there has been any other use of your information. You can also get more information at IdentityTheft.gov.
- 6. Do I need to come to Court?** You are welcome to attend court proceedings; however, unless you have received a subpoena, the Court does not require your attendance. If you plan on attending, you may want to verify the date and time by using the VNS Call Center or website. If you are a victim of

the charged offense(s) and wish to speak at sentencing, please call our office well in advance of the scheduled hearing date.

Because of the Court's schedule, hearing dates could change on very short notice. If you plan on attending, you may want to call the VNS Call Center or check the website to confirm the date and time. Please note, there is a 24-hour delay in information transfer to the website.

7. How will I get updates about the case? Through the Victim Notification System (VNS) we will continue to provide you with updated scheduling and event information if they occur. You may obtain current information about this case on the VNS website at <https://www.notify.usdoj.gov> or from the VNS Call Center at 1-866-DOJ-4YOU (1-866-365-4968) (TDD/TTY: 1-866-228-4619) (International: 1-502-213-2767). In addition, you may use the Call Center or Internet to update your contact information and/or change your decision about participation in the notification program. You may also find updates on the DOJ large cases website <https://www.justice.gov/largecases>. Select US v. Khemani, et al

8. Do I need to hire my own attorney? We will make our best efforts to ensure that you are provided the rights described in the Crime Victims' Rights Act. You may seek the advice of an attorney with respect to those rights. The role of the United States Attorney's Office is to prosecute cases fairly and justly. The interests of the United States may occasionally diverge from your interests as a victim.

We cannot provide legal advice, however you are free to seek the advice of an attorney if you so choose.

9. I do not have my VIN and PIN numbers can you give them to me? Each VNS notification will restate your VIN & PIN. If you do not have this correspondence, please contact the US Attorney's Office or the investigative agent assigned to the case.

10. How can I tell the judge how this impacted me? You can complete a Victim Impact Statement prior to sentencing. If you are contacted, please make every effort to provide accurate and detailed information. If you wish to speak at sentencing, please call our office well in advance of the scheduled hearing date.