



Department of Justice

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U.S. Law Enforcement Takes Action Against Approximately 2,300 Money Mules In Global Crackdown On Money Laundering

In the Eastern District of Kentucky, two significant cases against money mules are scheduled for sentencing.

LEXINGTON, KY—The U.S. Department of Justice, the FBI, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and six other federal law enforcement agencies announced the completion of the third annual Money Mule Initiative, a coordinated operation to disrupt the networks through which transnational fraudsters move the proceeds of their crimes. Money mules are individuals who assist fraudsters by receiving money from victims of fraud and forwarding it to the fraud organizers, many of whom are located abroad. Some money mules know they are assisting fraudsters, but others are unaware that their actions enable fraudsters' efforts to swindle money from consumers, businesses, and government unemployment funds. Europol announced a simultaneous effort, the European Money Mule Action (EMMA) yesterday.

Over the last two months, U.S. law enforcement agencies took action against over 2,300 money mules, far surpassing last year's effort, which acted against over 600 money mules. This year, actions occurred in every state in the country. The initiative announced today targeted money mules involved in a wide range of schemes including lottery fraud, romance scams, government imposter fraud, technical support fraud, business email compromise or CEO fraud, and unemployment insurance fraud. Many of these schemes target elderly or vulnerable members of society.

"Money mules fuel fraud against some of America's most vulnerable populations. Without the help of these money mules, many foreign fraud enterprises find it difficult to profit off of U.S. victims," said Attorney General William P. Barr. "As this initiative demonstrates, the Department of Justice is committed to disrupting money mule networks, taking actions against more money mules this year than ever before, in an effort to cut off the flow of funds from American consumers and businesses to transnational criminal organizations."

"Detecting and disrupting the work of money mules is critically important, as money mules are integral components of many organized criminal groups, including international fraud rings and transnational drug trafficking organizations," said Robert M. Duncan, Jr., United States

Attorney for the Eastern District of Kentucky. “We remain committed to working with our local, state, and federal law enforcement partners to disrupt the flow of illegal money and cutting off the lifeblood of these criminal organizations.”

“While some money mules know they are supporting criminal enterprises, others are unaware that they are helping criminals profit,” said James Robert Brown, Jr., Special Agent in Charge for FBI, Louisville Field Office. “Regardless, money mules add layers between the true criminal and the victim oftentimes making it more difficult for law enforcement to trace the money trail. To protect yourself, always be suspicious of someone asking for your bank account information or requesting that you move money for them.”

Eight federal law enforcement agencies participated in this year’s effort. Led by the Department of Justice’s Consumer Protection Branch, the FBI, and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the participating agencies include the Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation Office of Inspector General, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), Social Security Administration Office of Inspector General, U.S. Secret Service, and U.S. Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration.

Some highlights from this year’s efforts are:

- Actions were taken to halt the conduct of approximately 2,300 money mules, spanning 92 federal districts.
- Law enforcement served approximately 2,000 money mules with letters warning the money mules that they were facilitating fraud and could face civil or criminal consequences for continuing their actions. Agents conducted over 450 interviews.
- On approximately 30 instances, agents seized assets or facilitated the return of victim funds. Among the asset seizures was a 2019 Lamborghini, which was seized as part of an investigation into a business email compromise scheme.
- The U.S. Postal Inspection Service filed 14 administrative actions requiring money mules to cease facilitating fraud.
- U.S. Attorney’s Offices and the Consumer Protection Branch filed 17 civil injunctive actions seeking court orders requiring money mules to stop facilitating fraudulent activity.

Over the past year, the Eastern District of Kentucky has worked in conjunction with federal, state, and local partners to dismantle two money mule schemes operating in the District.

- **U.S. vs. Fafunmi et al.**- Ismaila Fafunmi admitted that, beginning in June 2018, he worked in conjunction with others, who communicated through online chats, about a scheme to defraud U.S. citizens through a romance scheme. In furtherance of this scheme, Fafunmi and his co-conspirators would set up fake profiles on dating websites profiling American men, often military members. Fafunmi’s co-conspirators would engage in conversations with victims, typically women older than 50, through the dating website, making the victims believe they were in a romantic relationship with the individual in the fictitious profile. Fafunmi and his co-conspirators would then convince these unsuspecting women to send money for various reasons. One victim of the scheme lived in Kentucky, and sent more than \$200,000 to a person she believed to be her boyfriend. In another scheme, Fafunmi received funds from another female over 50, who

believed she was being awarded a large grant and had to pay fees up front in order to receive her award. Fafunmi is pending sentencing on May 13, 2021.

- **U.S. vs. Inkoom et al.**- Baaki Abdul Majeed conspired with Kahad Wuupini and Thomas Inkoom, in a money laundering conspiracy. Evidence revealed that the conspirators agreed to aid in and launder \$757,000 in funds, which were defrauded from a victim of an online romance fraud scheme. After receiving cashier's checks, personal checks, and cash from the victim, Majeed and his co-conspirators laundered the money from Washington and New Jersey, back to Ghana, by purchasing cars that were shipped to Ghana, obtaining cashier's checks, and wiring funds to each other or other individuals in the United States and Ghana. The purpose of these transactions was to conceal and disguise the proceeds of their online romance fraud. Majeed is pending sentencing on January 29, 2021.

To find public education materials, as well as information about how fraudsters use and recruit money mules, please visit www.justice.gov/civil/consumer-protection-branch/money-mule-initiative.

Since President Trump signed the bipartisan Elder Abuse Prevention and Prosecution Act (EAPPA) into law, the Department of Justice has participated in hundreds of enforcement actions in criminal and civil cases that targeted or disproportionately affected seniors. In January 2020, the department designated "Preventing and Disrupting Transnational Elder Fraud" as an Agency Priority Goal, one of its top four priorities. In March 2020, the department announced the largest elder fraud enforcement action in American history, charging more than 400 defendants in a nationwide elder fraud sweep. The department has also conducted hundreds of trainings and outreach sessions across the country since the passage of the Act.

The department's extensive efforts to combat elder fraud seek to halt the billions of dollars seniors lose each year to fraud schemes, including those perpetrated by transnational criminal organizations. The best method for prevention, however, is sharing information about the various types of elder fraud schemes with relatives, friends, neighbors, and other seniors who can use that information to protect themselves.

If you or someone you know is age 60 or older and has been a victim of financial fraud, help is standing by at the National Elder Fraud Hotline: 1-833-FRAUD-11 (1-833-372-8311). This U.S. Department of Justice hotline, managed by the Office for Victims of Crime, is staffed by experienced professionals who provide personalized support to callers by assessing the needs of the victim, and identifying relevant next steps. Case managers will identify appropriate reporting agencies, provide information to callers to assist them in reporting, connect callers directly with appropriate agencies, and provide resources and referrals, on a case-by-case basis. Reporting is the first step. Reporting can help authorities identify those who commit fraud and reporting certain financial losses due to fraud as soon as possible can increase the likelihood of recovering losses. The hotline is staffed seven days a week from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. eastern time. English, Spanish and other languages are available.

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