

PRESS RELEASE

Bergen County Man Sentenced to Twenty Months in Prison for COVID-19 Fraud

Friday, May 30, 2025

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of New Jersey

NEWARK N.J. – A New Jersey man was sentenced to 20 months in prison for fraudulently obtaining approximately \$149,900 in federal Economic Injury Disaster Loans ("EIDL") loans, U.S. Alina Habba announced.

George Leguen, 51, of Paramus, New Jersey, previously plead guilty before U.S. District Judge Madeline Cox Arleo to an information charging him with wire fraud and money laundering. Judge Arleo imposed the sentence in Newark federal court.

According to documents filed in this case and statements made in court:

From August 2020 through January 2021, Leguen participated in a scheme to defraud and receive COVID-19 emergency relief funds meant for distressed small businesses under the EIDL program. Leguen applied to the Small Business Administration ("SBA") on behalf of a business he owned and controlled. He falsified information that he submitted in support of that application, including the number of employees, annual gross revenue figures, and fraudulent federal tax returns. Based on this false information, Leguen was approved for and received an EIDL loan in the amount of \$149,900. After receiving the EIDL funds, he diverted the proceeds for his personal gain.

In addition to the prison term, Judge Arleo sentenced Leguen to 3 years of supervised release, forfeiture was ordered in the amount of \$149,900, and restitution in the amount of \$174,426.37.

U.S. Attorney Habba credited special agents of Internal Revenue Service – Criminal Investigation, Newark Field Office, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Jenifer Piovesan; the Drug Enforcement Administration, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Cheryl Ortiz of the New Jersey Field Division; special agents of the U.S. Secret Service, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Aaron Hatley, Newark Field Office; and special agents of the U.S. Department of Labor – Office of the Inspector

General, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Jonathan Mellone, Northeast Region, with the investigation.

The District of New Jersey COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Strike Force is one of five strike forces established throughout the United States by the U.S. Department of Justice to investigate and prosecute COVID-19 fraud. The strike forces focus on large-scale, multi-state pandemic relief fraud perpetrated by criminal organizations and transnational actors. The strike forces are interagency law enforcement efforts, using prosecutor-led and data analyst-driven teams designed to identify and bring to justice those who stole pandemic relief funds.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Fatime Meka Cano of the Economic Crimes Unit in Newark.

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 Hotline at 866-720-5721 or via the NCDF Web Complaint Form at: <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form>.

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Defense counsel: Jeffrey Lichtman, Esq. and Matthew Cohan, Esq.

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