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Maryland Men Sentenced to Prison Terms for Membership in Computer Fraud and Identity Theft Ring That Targeted State Governments

ALBANY, NEW YORK – Guy Cuomo a/k/a "John Monaco," age 54, of Frederick, Maryland, was sentenced today to 45 months in prison for computer fraud, misuse of a social security number, aggravated identity theft and related conspiracy charges for his role in a scheme to sell information unlawfully obtained from the New York State Department of Labor and workforce agencies in other states.

The announcement was made by United States Attorney Carla B. Freedman and Jonathan Mellone, Special Agent in Charge, New York Region, United States Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General (USDOL-OIG).

The evidence at Cuomo's 5-day trial showed that Cuomo worked for and managed companies owned by Jason "J.R." Trowbridge in Frederick, Maryland, including Paymerica Corporation. Paymerica researched where purported debtors worked and sold the employer information—called place-of-employment information or "POE"—to debt collectors and companies selling information to debt collectors. In the debt collecting industry, the process is known as "skiptracing."

To obtain the place-of-employment information, Cuomo and other members of the conspiracy pretended to be the debtors, created thousands of online unemployment insurance applications in the debtors' names and with the debtors' personal identifiers, including social security numbers, and completed the applications to the point where each debtor's last known place of employment appeared. After confirming that the debtors worked for the relevant employers, Paymerica sold the place-of-employment information for approximately $90 per debtor. Over the course of approximately three years, Paymerica made nearly $1 million selling the stolen place-of-employment information.

Cuomo, Trowbridge and other conspirators took a number of steps to hide their activities from state agencies and law enforcement, including using Virtual Private Networks, or VPNs, to mask the Internet Protocol addresses used to access and fill out the unemployment insurance applications in the debtors' names. The evidence showed that the scheme involved attempts to obtain place-of-employment information for as many as 200,000 people from all 50 states and that Paymerica sold place-of-employment information for at least 12,000 people from 40 states.

United States District Judge Mae A. D'Agostino also ordered Cuomo to serve a 3-year term of supervised release, to begin after he is released from prison.

On March 10, 2022, Senior United States District Judge Thomas J. McAvoy accepted an agreed-upon sentence and ordered that Trowbridge—who pled guilty to conspiracy, misuse of social security number, and aggravated identity theft on November 9, 2021—serve 39 months in prison to be followed by a 2-year term of supervised release, and to pay a $30,000 fine. Trowbridge also agreed to forfeiture of $446,996.46 held in various bank accounts tied to the scheme.

Trowbridge and Cuomo's five co-defendants previously pled guilty to the following charges and will be sentenced by Judge D'Agostino at a later date:

Defendant	Charge(s)	Maximum Prison Term
Robin Chapin a/k/a "Thomas Price," age 64, of Frederick, Maryland	Conspiracy to commit computer fraud, accessing a protected computer and obtaining information, aggravated identity theft	Two years for aggravated identity theft, maximum term of 10 years on remaining charges
Rebecca Fogle a/k/a "Roxanne Morris" and "Jessica Felton," age 28, of Woodsboro, Maryland	Conspiracy to commit computer fraud, accessing a protected computer and obtaining information, aggravated identity theft	Two years for aggravated identity theft, maximum term of 10 years on remaining charges
Shamair Brison a/k/a "Felicia Carter," age 37, of Frederick, Maryland	Aggravated identity theft	Two years
Sarah Bromfield a/k/a "Nicole Wagner," age 42, of Frederick, Maryland	Aggravated identity theft	Two years
Anna Hardy a/k/a "Sarah Thomas," age 69, of Frederick, Maryland	Aggravated identity theft	Two years

A defendant's sentence is imposed by a judge based on the particular statute the defendant is charged with violating, the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, and other factors.

The case was investigated by USDOL-OIG, with assistance from the New York State Department of Labor, Office of Special Investigations, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Joshua R. Rosenthal and Cyrus P.W. Rieck. The case was also prosecuted to indictment by Assistant U.S. Attorney Wayne A. Myers.

Topic(s):
Labor & Employment
Cybercrime
Financial Fraud
Identity Theft

Component(s):
USAO - New York, Northern