

PRESS RELEASE

# Metro Atlanta Man Sentenced for Laundering Fraudulently Obtained COVID-19 Unemployment Funds

Wednesday, April 3, 2024

## For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Northern District of Georgia

ATLANTA - Austin Martin Siampwizi was sentenced on April 1, 2024, for laundering money procured from fraudulent unemployment claims filed during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Siampwizi laundered proceeds from fraudulent unemployment claims filed using the stolen identities of more than 50 victims," said U.S. Attorney Ryan K. Buchanan. "His sentence of imprisonment is an example of our office's commitment to work closely with our federal and state law enforcement partners to hold individuals accountable for defrauding the CARES Act program."

"Austin Martin Siampwizi engaged in a scheme to purchase and subsequently cash hundreds of money orders that were funded with fraudulently obtained unemployment insurance (UI) benefits. The UI benefits were from fraudulent online claims submitted to the Washington Employment Security Department using stolen identities. Today's sentencing affirms the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General's commitment to working with our federal and state law enforcement partners to investigate identity theft involving the UI program," said Mathew Broadhurst, Special Agent-in-Charge, Southeast Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General.

"The defendant chose to enrich himself by committing fraud, further depleting limited funds that were designated to help businesses struggling to survive during the pandemic," said Robert C. Donovan, Acting Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Secret Service Atlanta Field Office. "This case signifies our commitment to protect citizens and businesses from fraud and identity theft. We will continue to work closely with our local,

state, and federal law enforcement partners to prosecute those who abuse these programs.”

According to U.S. Attorney Buchanan, the charges and other information presented in court: The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (“CARES”) Act created a temporary federal program that provided up to 39 weeks of unemployment benefits for those unemployed as a result of the pandemic and included a provision to provide temporary benefits to individuals who had exhausted their entitlement to regular benefits or were otherwise not eligible. That temporary federal program was administered by state employment agencies.

Siampwizi laundered money obtained from fraudulent unemployment claims submitted to the Employment Security Department of Washington State. These claims were filed using stolen personally identifiable information of over 50 individuals. Siampwizi also submitted fraudulent Economic Injury Disaster Loan and Paycheck Protection Program loan applications for his two businesses, Global Car Rental, LLC, and Global Group Development & Construction, LLC.

Siampwizi, 47, of Atlanta, Georgia, was sentenced to three years, one month in prison to be followed by three years of supervised release. He was also ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$279,210.52. On December 14, 2023, Siampwizi pleaded guilty to money laundering conspiracy.

This case was investigated by the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, and the U.S. Secret Service.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Sarah E. Klapman prosecuted the case.

On May 17, 2021, the Attorney General established the COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Task Force to marshal the resources of the Department of Justice in partnership with agencies across government to enhance efforts to combat and prevent pandemic-related fraud. The Task Force bolsters efforts to investigate and prosecute the most culpable domestic and international criminal actors and assists agencies tasked with administering relief programs to prevent fraud by, among other methods, augmenting and incorporating existing coordination mechanisms, identifying resources and techniques to uncover fraudulent actors and their schemes, and sharing and harnessing information and insights gained from prior enforcement efforts. For more information on the Department’s response to the pandemic, please visit <https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus>

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

For further information please contact the U.S. Attorney's Public Affairs Office at [USAGAN.PressEmails@usdoj.gov](mailto:USAGAN.PressEmails@usdoj.gov) or (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is <http://www.justice.gov/usao-ndga>.

*Updated April 3, 2024*

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## **Topic**

**FINANCIAL FRAUD**

## **Component**

[USAO - Georgia, Northern](#)