

Middle District Of Florida Task Force Continues To Combat COVID-19 Fraud

Wednesday, July 12, 2023

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Middle District of Florida

Tampa, FL – United States Attorney Roger B. Handberg announces the results achieved by the Middle District of Florida's efforts to combat fraud related to COVID-19. Those efforts have included complementary actions by the United States Attorney's Office's (USAO-MDFL) Criminal, Asset Recovery, Appellate, and Civil Divisions, along with federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies.

“The Middle District of Florida United States Attorney’s Office continues to pursue, investigate, prosecute, and recover money from those who were engaged in major or sophisticated fraud schemes designed to steal benefits intended for Americans coping with the myriad impacts of the pandemic,” said U.S. Attorney Roger Handberg.

On the criminal enforcement front, the USAO-MDFL and federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies combined resources in March 2020 to form the Middle District of Florida COVID-19 Fraud Task Force to identify, investigate, and prosecute fraud related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Since its inception, the Task Force has prosecuted 67 defendants for fraud schemes designed to exploit federal programs including the Paycheck Protection Program (“PPP”), Economic Injury Disaster Loans (“EIDL”), Unemployment Insurance (“UI”), the Main Street Lending Program (“MSLP”), the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (“ERAP”), as well as government Healthcare programs such as Medicare (“HCF”). Collectively, these defendants sought to defraud the United States of over \$78 million. Forty-seven of those defendants have been found guilty, while prosecution remains pending against 20 defendants. *(See chart below for criminal case details.)*

For example, in April 2023, former Jacksonville Sheriff's Office Corrections Officer [Deonna Burke](#) was charged with wire fraud relating to an alleged scheme to obtain a PPP loan for a nonexistent babysitting business.

And in June 2023, [Timothy and Lisa Joloff](#) were charged in a scheme relating to EIDL and PPP applications submitted by Timothy Joloff between April and May 2020. Timothy Joloff's false and fraudulent representations caused the SBA and a PPP lender to approve and fund 11 EIDLs and 6 PPP loans, totaling approximately \$2.14 million. Timothy Joloff and his wife, Lisa Joloff, allegedly used the funds to purchase three pontoon boats, real estate in Indiana, home furnishings, outdoor kitchens for their homes, a 2020 Polaris UTV, as well as jewelry, and two dogs. The couple also fraudulently used more than \$600,000 in EIDL funds to purchase a furniture business in Indiana and a landscaping business in Sarasota, which had no connection to the businesses for which the couple had obtained COVID relief funds.

As a result of the USAO-MDFL's Appellate Division's advocacy, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit affirmed the convictions and sentence of [Casey David Crowther](#), who had been found guilty in Ft. Myers of bank fraud, making a false statement to a lending institution, and two counts of money laundering in connection with his PPP loan scheme. Crowther had obtained a \$2.1 million PPP loan by stating that he intended to use the money for payroll, rent, and utilities for his company, Target Roofing and Sheet Metal, but, according to the evidence at trial, he instead had his bank deposit the money into a secret account separate from his company's main operating account. He quickly used the account for personal use, spending nearly \$700,000 on a 40-foot pleasure boat and \$55,000 on a horse. When Crowther's bank warned him that he was likely to be audited, he attempted to conceal his fraud by falsely "hiring" family members and dozens of fictitious employees to inflate his company's apparent payroll.

The U.S. Attorney General has 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. For more information on the department's response to the pandemic, please visit <https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus>.

Through the PPP, the federal government authorized over \$600 billion in forgivable loans to small businesses for job retention and certain other expenses through the PPP. The EIDL program provides economic relief to small businesses that are currently experiencing a temporary loss of revenue. The MSLP provided support to small and medium-sized businesses and their employees across the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic. UI programs provided unemployment benefits to eligible workers who became unemployed through no fault of their own.

The criminal cases charged by the Middle District of Florida COVID-19 Fraud Task Force have been investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the U.S. Secret Service, Internal Revenue Service—Criminal Investigation, the Department of Labor—Office of Inspector General, the U.S. Postal Service, the Federal Housing Finance Agency, the Small Business Administration, the Small Business Administration—Office of Inspector General, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation—Office of Inspector General, Homeland Security Investigations, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Special Inspector General for Pandemic Recovery, Federal Reserve Board—Office of Inspector General, Department of Health and Human Services—Office of Inspector General, the Metropolitan Bureau of Investigation, the Tampa Police Department, the Orlando Police Department, the Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office, the Manatee County Sheriff’s Office, the Hillsborough County Sheriff’s Office, the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office, the Winter Park Police Department, the Osceola County Sheriff’s Office, the Seminole County Sheriff’s Office, and the Orange County Sheriff’s Office. The cases are being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys throughout the Middle District of Florida.

The Department of Justice needs the public’s assistance in remaining vigilant and reporting suspected fraudulent activity. To report suspected fraud, contact the National Center for Disaster Fraud (“NCDF”) at (866) 720-5721 or file an online complaint at: <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/webform/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form>. Complaints filed will be reviewed at the NCDF and referred to federal, state, local, or international law enforcement or regulatory agencies for investigation.

United States Attorney’s Office for the Middle District of Florida

COVID Fraud Criminal Cases

Charged Cases

Defendant(s) (Age)	Charge(s) <i>Max. Imprisonment</i>	Type of Fraud*	Intended Loss Amount
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Tampa Division

Alexander Alli	Wire fraud conspiracy <i>Maximum Prison Term: 20 Years</i>	EIDL	\$80k
Ellyn Pinkney	Wire fraud <i>Maximum Prison Term: 20 Years</i>	EIDL	\$40k
Kieanna Garrett	Wire fraud <i>Maximum Prison Term: 20 Years</i>	EIDL	\$40k
Nicole Bramble-King	Wire fraud <i>Maximum Prison Term: 20 Years</i>	PPP	\$40k
Mehdi Tazi	Conspiracy <i>Maximum Prison Term: 5 years</i> Wire fraud <i>Maximum Prison Term: 20 Years</i> Aggravated identity theft <i>Maximum Prison Term: Two Years Consecutive</i>	UI	\$1.5M
Modupe Ogundele	Wire fraud <i>Maximum Prison Term: 20 Years</i>	PPP	\$20k
Jalissa McDuffy	Wire fraud <i>Maximum Prison Term: 20 Years</i>	PPP	\$41k

Aggravated identity theft

Devontaie Deravil	Maximum Prison Term: Two Years Consecutive	UI	\$480k
	Access device fraud		
	Maximum Prison Term: 10 Years		

These COVID Fraud cases from the Tampa Division are being handled by AUSAs Rachel Jones, Tiffany Fields, Greg Pizzo, Candace Rich, and Jennifer Peresie

Orlando Division

Evan Edwards Joshua Edwards	Conspiracy to commit bank fraud (E. Edwards)	PPP	\$8M
	Maximum Prison Term: 30 years		
	Bank fraud (J. Edwards)		
	Maximum Prison Term: 30 years		
	Visa fraud (J. Edwards)		
	Maximum Prison Term: 10 years		
	False statements (J. Edwards)		
	Maximum Prison Term: 30 years		
Emmet Bowens	Wire fraud	PPP	\$740k
	Maximum Prison Term: 20 Years		

Illegal monetary transactions

Maximum Prison Term: 10 Years

Latresia Wilson	False Statements <i>Maximum Prison Term: 20 Years</i>	HCF	\$2.6M
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These COVID Fraud cases from the Orlando Division are being handled by AUSAs Kara Wick and Amanda Daniels

Jacksonville Division

Deonna Burke	Wire fraud <i>Maximum Prison Term: 20 Years</i>	PPP	\$20k
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Christopher Daragjati	Wire fraud <i>Maximum Prison Term: 20 Years</i>	UI	\$150k
	Theft of government funds <i>Maximum Prison Term: 10 Years</i>		
	Aggravated identity theft <i>Maximum: Prison Term: Two Years Consecutive</i>		

These COVID Fraud cases from the Jacksonville Division are being handled by AUSA Kevin Frein

Fort Myers Division

Venera Price	<p>Mail fraud</p> <p><i>Maximum Prison Term: 20 Years</i></p>	ERAP	\$82k
Ismaelle Manuel	<p>Bank Fraud</p> <p><i>Maximum Prison Term: 30 Years</i></p> <p>Wire Fraud</p> <p><i>Maximum Prison Term: 20 Years</i></p>	PPP	\$280k
Denis Casseus	<p>Bank Fraud</p> <p><i>Maximum Prison Term: 30 Years</i></p> <p>Wire Fraud</p> <p><i>Maximum Prison Term: 20 Years</i></p>	PPP	\$298k
Timothy Jolloff	<p>Wire Fraud</p> <p><i>Maximum Prison Term: 20 Years</i></p> <p>Money laundering</p> <p><i>Maximum Prison Term: 20 Years</i></p> <p>Illegal monetary transactions</p> <p><i>Maximum Prison Term: 10 Years</i></p>	PPP/EIDL	\$2.1M
Lisa Jolloff	<p>Money laundering</p> <p><i>Maximum Prison Term: 20 Years</i></p> <p>Illegal monetary transactions</p>	PPP/EIDL	\$2.1M

Maximum Prison Term: 10 Years

These COVID Fraud cases from the Fort Myers Division are being handled by AUSA Yolande Viacava and Trent Reichling

Ocala Division

Henry Wade	Wire Fraud Maximum Prison Term: 20 Years	EIDL	\$500k
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This COVID Fraud case from the Ocala Division is being handled by AUSA Hannah Nowalk

Adjudicated Cases

Tampa Division

Joseph Abdo	Wire fraud Maximum Prison Term: 20 Years Illegal monetary transactions Maximum Prison Term: 10 Years	PPP	\$500k
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Alexander Leszczynski	Wire fraud Maximum Prison Term: 20 Years Bank fraud	PPP	\$200k
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**Maximum Prison Term:
30 Years**

**Illegal monetary
transactions**

**Maximum Prison Term:
10 Years**

Keaujay Hornsby	Racketeering conspiracy <i>Maximum Prison Term: 20 Years</i> Aggravated identity theft <i>Maximum Prison Term: Two Years Consecutive</i> Access device fraud <i>Maximum Prison Term: 10 Years</i>	UI	\$3M
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Racketeering conspiracy

**Maximum Prison Term:
20 Years**

**Aggravated identity
theft**

**Maximum Prison Term:
Two Years Consecutive**

Access device fraud

Kareem Spann

UI

\$3M

**Maximum Prison Term:
10 Years**

Marqus Willard Johnson	Bank fraud <i>Maximum Prison Term: 30 Years</i> Money laundering <i>Maximum Prison Term: 20 Years</i>	PPP	\$500k
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Charles Cunningham	Bank fraud <i>Maximum Prison Term: 30 years</i>	PPP	\$800k
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These COVID Fraud cases from the Tampa Division are being handled by AUSAs Rachel Jones, Diego Novaes, Tiffany Fields, Jennifer Peresie, and Greg Pizzo, and DOJ Trial Attorney John Scanlon

Orlando Division

Brian Blake	Possession of device- making equipment <i>Maximum Prison Term: 15 Years</i> Access device fraud <i>Maximum Prison Term: 10 Years</i>	PPP/UI	\$832k
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	Aggravated identity theft <i>Maximum: Prison Term: Two Years Consecutive</i>		
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This COVID Fraud case from the Orlando Division is being handled by AUSAs Chauncey Bratt

Jacksonville Division

Desmond Williams	Wire fraud conspiracy <i>Maximum Prison Term: 20 Years</i>	PPP	\$40k
	Wire fraud <i>Maximum Prison Term: 20 Years</i>		

Kenneth Landers	Wire Fraud <i>Maximum Prison Term: 20 Years</i>	PPP	\$1.4M
	Money Laundering <i>Maximum Prison Term: 30 Years</i>		

These COVID Fraud cases from the Jacksonville Division are being handled by AUSA Kevin Frein and Michael Coolican

Sentenced Cases

Tampa Division

<p>Louis Thornton, III</p>	<p>Wire Fraud <i>Sentence Imposed: 42 months in federal prison</i></p>	<p>EIDL/PPP</p>	<p>\$815k</p>
<p>Kary Stevenson Corey Quinn</p>	<p>Conspiracy to commit access device fraud and aggravated identity theft <i>Sentence Imposed: 5 years, 10 months in federal prison (Stevenson)</i> <i>Sentence Imposed: 7 years in federal prison (Quinn)</i></p>	<p>UI</p>	<p>\$1M</p>
<p>Bridgitte Keim</p>	<p>Bank fraud <i>Sentence Imposed: 2 years in federal prison</i></p>	<p>PPP</p>	<p>\$588k</p>
<p>Wayne Ganaway</p>	<p>Conspiracy to commit wire fraud <i>Sentence Imposed: 4 years in federal prison</i></p>	<p>EIDL</p>	<p>\$300k</p>
<p>Eriaius Bentley</p>	<p>Racketeering conspiracy, aggravated identity</p>	<p>UI</p>	<p>\$3M</p>

	<p>theft, access device fraud</p> <p><i>Sentence Imposed: One year in federal prison</i></p>		
Rolanda Wingfield	<p>Access device fraud, Aggravated identity theft</p> <p><i>Sentenced Imposed: 3 years in federal prison</i></p>	UI	\$135k
Tywon Spann	<p>Racketeering conspiracy, aggravated identity theft, access device fraud</p> <p><i>Sentence Imposed: 6 years and 9 months in federal prison</i></p>	UI	\$3M
Randy Jones	<p>Wire fraud, aggravated identity theft</p> <p><i>Sentence Imposed: 5 years and 1 month in federal prison</i></p>	EIDL/UI	\$250k
Julio Lugo	<p>Conspiracy to commit money laundering</p> <p><i>Sentence Imposed: 7 years and 6 months in federal prison</i></p>	EIDL/PPP	\$4.4M

Keith Nicoletta	<p>Conspiracy to commit money laundering</p> <p><i>Sentence Imposed: 24 months in federal prison</i></p>	PPP	\$1.9M
Rosenide Venant	<p>Conspiracy to commit money laundering</p> <p><i>Sentence Imposed: 5 years in federal prison</i></p>	EIDL/PPP	\$413k
Melinda Hernandez	<p>Conspiracy to commit wire fraud</p> <p>Wire fraud and aggravated identity theft</p> <p><i>Sentence imposed: Three years and six months in federal prison</i></p>	UI	\$1.5M
Bri'antina Mills	<p>Wire fraud and theft of government funds</p> <p><i>Sentence imposed: 15 months in federal prison</i></p>		\$10K
Jorge Gutierrez Echeverria	<p>Wire fraud</p> <p><i>Sentence imposed: Two years and six months in federal prison</i></p>	EIDL	\$150k

Omar Esquivel Bello	Wire fraud <i>Sentence imposed: 15 months in federal prison</i>	EIDL	\$242k
Steve Moodie	Conspiracy to commit wire fraud, wire fraud, aggravated identity theft <i>Sentence imposed: 5 years and 10 months in federal prison</i>	UI	\$1.5M
Richard Simpkins	Conspiracy to commit money laundering <i>Sentence imposed: 5 years and 10 months in federal prison</i>	PPP	\$1.9M

These COVID Fraud cases from the Tampa Division were handled by AUSAs Rachel Jones, Greg Pizzo, Tiffany Fields, Diego Novaes, Jennifer Peresie, and SAUSA Chris Poor

Orlando Division

Daniel Johnson	Conspiracy to commit wire fraud, aggravated identity theft, unlawful transfer of firearm <i>Sentence Imposed: 7 years, 6 months in federal prison</i>	UI	\$2.3M
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Jacquavius Smith	<p>Possession of short-barreled rifle; felon in possession of firearm; and aggravated identity theft</p> <p><i>Sentence Imposed: 7 years, 1 month in federal prison</i></p>	PPP	\$10k
Johnson Eustache	<p>Wire fraud</p> <p><i>Sentence Imposed: 5 years in federal prison</i></p>	EIDL/PPP	\$2.2M
Joseph Harrison	<p>Conspiracy to commit wire fraud</p> <p><i>Sentence Imposed: 12 months in federal prison</i></p>	UI	\$2.1M
Tomas Ziupsnys	<p>Conspiracy to commit bank fraud; bank fraud; aggravated identity theft</p> <p><i>Sentence Imposed: 5 years in federal prison</i></p>	PPP	\$2M
Holly Urban	<p>Conspiracy to commit bank fraud</p> <p><i>Sentence Imposed: 30 months in federal prison</i></p>	PPP	\$1.5M

Joel Greenberg	Conspiracy to commit wire fraud and other offenses while on pretrial release	EIDL	\$430k
	<i>Sentence Imposed: 11 years in federal prison</i>		

Don Cisternino	Wire fraud, illegal monetary transactions, and aggravated identity theft	PPP	\$7.2M
	<i>Sentence Imposed: 8 years and 6 months in federal prison</i>		

Keith Ingersoll	Conspiracy to commit wire fraud, wire fraud, aggravated identity theft	EIDL	\$66k
	<i>Sentence imposed: 9 years, 1 month in federal prison.</i>		

Jaheim Davis	Access device fraud and aggravated identity theft	UI	\$219k
	<i>Sentence imposed: 3 years, 6 months in federal prison.</i>		

Teresa McIntyre	Conspiracy to commit wire fraud and other offenses	EIDL	\$730k
	<i>Sentence Imposed: 5 years' probation</i>		

These COVID Fraud cases from the Orlando Division were handled by AUSAs John Gardella, Amanda Daniels, Chauncey Bratt, Emily Chang, Shannon Laurie, and Jennifer Harrington, and U.S. Attorney Roger Handberg

Jacksonville Division

Jacob Byrd	Wire fraud	PPP	\$10k
	<i>Sentence Imposed: probation</i>		

This COVID Fraud case from the Jacksonville Division was handled by AUSA Kevin Frein

Fort Myers Division

Casey Crowther	Bank fraud, false statement to a financial institution, illegal monetary transaction	PPP	\$2.7M
	<i>Sentence Imposed: 3 years, 1 month in federal prison</i>		
Anthony Bruey Amber Bruey	Conspiracy to commit wire fraud, wire fraud, conspiracy to commit money laundering,	PPP/EIDL	\$881k

	<p>illegal monetary transactions</p> <p><i>Sentence Imposed:</i></p> <p><i>Anthony Bruey: 4 years, 3 months in federal prison</i></p> <p><i>Amber Bruey: 4 years in federal prison</i></p>		
Edrica Leann Watson	<p>False statement to a lending institution</p> <p><i>Sentence Imposed: 15 months in federal prison</i></p>	PPP	\$392k
Daniel Joseph Tisone	<p>Wire fraud, bank fraud, money laundering, aggravated identity theft, possession of ammunition by a prohibited person</p> <p><i>Sentence Imposed: 7 years in federal prison</i></p>	PPP/EIDL/MSLP	\$10.7M
Liliana Gonzalez	<p>Wire fraud</p> <p><i>Sentence Imposed: 5 years of probation with 18 months of home confinement</i></p>	PPP	\$169k
Al Clint LaRoche	Bank fraud	PPP	\$1M

Sentence Imposed: Two years in federal prison

These COVID Fraud cases from the Fort Myers Division were handled by AUSAs Trent Reichling, Michael Leeman, and Jesus M. Casas

Ocala Division

Wire Fraud

Lavelle Harris	<i>Sentence Imposed: Two years and three months in federal prison</i>	PPP	\$1.2M
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This COVID Fraud case from the Ocala Division was handled by AUSA Hannah Nowalk

Types of Fraud*

Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL)

Paycheck Protection Program (PPP)

Unemployment Insurance (UI)

Main Street Lending Program (MSLP)

Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)

Health Care Fraud (HCF)

Updated July 12, 2023

Topics

CORONAVIRUS

DISASTER FRAUD

FINANCIAL FRAUD

Component

[USAO - Florida, Middle](#)