

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

District of Maryland

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Nigerian National Sentenced to Eight Years in Federal Prison for an Elder Fraud Scheme and Unrelated Cares Act Covid-19 Unemployment Fraud Scheme

The Elder Fraud Scheme Defrauded 13 Victims of More Than \$478,000

Greenbelt, Maryland – U.S. District Judge Theodore D. Chuang sentenced Oluwaseyi Akinyemi, a/k/a “Paddy Linkin”, a/k/a “Joseph Kadin”, age 35, of Hyattsville, Maryland, yesterday to eight years in federal prison, followed by three years of supervised release for two counts of mail fraud relating to a social media advanced fee fraud scheme that targeted elderly victims. Judge Chuang also ordered Akinyemi to pay \$486,119.07 in restitution to his victims.

The sentence was announced by United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Erik L. Barron; Acting Special Agent in Charge Selwyn Smith of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Baltimore; Acting Special Agent in Charge Troy Springer, of the Washington Regional Office, U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General; and Chief Malik Aziz of the Prince George's County Police Department.

“Akinyemi committed elder fraud and CARES Act COVID-19 fraud, which are both priorities for this Office,” said United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Erik L. Barron. “Akinyemi not only took advantage of a nursing care patient, a national health crisis, and an employment crisis, but he also caused financial harm to at least 13 elderly victims.”

According to his guilty plea, from July 10, 2018 to April 29, 2019, Akinyemi and at least one co-conspirator engaged in a social media based elder fraud scheme. Members of the conspiracy targeted elderly victims on social media platforms, representing themselves as agents of both real and fictitious government agencies and offered victims non-existent financial rewards if the victims first sent cash, money orders, or gift cards to cover associated “taxes and fees.” Conspirators even impersonated social media accounts of the victim's friends to vouch for their fraudulent financial scheme. Believing that they would receive a financial reward, the victims sent cash, money orders, gift cards, and other valuable items through the mail to Akinyemi as well as other members of the conspiracy in order to obtain a financial reward. Akinyemi, who lived in Landover, Maryland at the time, received packages under the aliases of Paddy Linkin,” “Flex,” “Joseph Kadin,” “Anna Marcos,” and other aliases. After receiving the fraudulently obtained funds, Akinyemi kept a portion of the funds and provided the rest of the fraudulently obtained cash to co-conspirators in Nigeria. Akinyemi admitted that this advance fee fraud scheme defrauded 13 victims from around the United States, ranging in age from 47 to 78 years old, of a total of \$478,145.07.

For example, Victim 1, who was 78 years old and lived in Texas, received an application via social media to apply to a purported federal government grant program. The application was accompanied by a message from a person whom Victim 1 believed was a friend, vouching for the program. Victim 1 was told by members of the conspiracy that he had been approved for \$100,000 in grant funds but would need to pay taxes before he could receive the grant funds. As instructed by members of the

conspiracy, Victim 1 sent multiple packages of money, including to Akinyemi. To induce Victim 1 to continue to send money, members of the conspiracy sent Victim 1 electronic “certificates,” including a “Certificate of Completion” bearing the Internal Revenue Service seal, stating that it was from the “Federal and State Tax Institutes.” Victim 1 also received a certificate with a U.S. flag on it with the words “Federal Grants” next to it which included Victim 1’s full name and the text: “Federal Government Grants for the sum of \$5,000,000.” After receiving these certificates, Victim 1 continued to send money to Akinyemi and other members of the conspiracy. In total, Victim 1 sent between approximately \$70,000 to \$80,000 to Akinyemi.

Victim 2, who was 71 years old and lived in Indiana, received a message from someone they believed to be a high school friend regarding a “Strengthening Community Fund,” but was, in fact, a member of the conspiracy posing as the victim’s high school friend. The conspiracy member told Victim 2 that they received money from the fund in the recent past and that there were different amounts for which a person could apply. The member of the conspiracy then provided Victim 2 with the contact information for a fictitious agent representing the “Fund.”

After Victim 2 contacted and sought information regarding the Fund, a member of the conspiracy masquerading as an agent asked Victim 2 if they were ready to apply. When Victim 2 communicated their desire to do so, the member of the conspiracy sought biographical information from Victim 2, including their monthly income. Once Victim 2 provided this information, the member of the conspiracy informed Victim 2 that they had been “approved.” Victim 2 applied for \$80,000, which Victim 2 believed would cost \$800 in fees. Victim 2 sent a total of approximately \$50,000 in fictitious fees and taxes in order to obtain money from the fictitious fund.

During an interview with law enforcement on April 25, 2019, Akinyemi confirmed that he had received packages from victims throughout the country, detailed the scheme to defraud, and informed investigators that individuals in Nigeria were responsible for soliciting the victims to send money to him. Further, Akinyemi stated that he received approximately \$80,000 in the mail in the year prior to his interview. A subsequent review of Akinyemi’s phone revealed, among other things, photos of tracking numbers and dollar amounts, a receipt for a money order, and conversations with conspirators discussing the percentage of the proceeds Akinyemi would take for his participation in the conspiracy. At least five victims suffered a substantial financial hardship as a result of the money that was fraudulently obtained by Akinyemi and his co-conspirators during the execution of the scheme.

According to his plea agreement, beginning in December 2020, Akinyemi and other co-conspirators also illegally obtained unemployment and CARES Act COVID-19 related benefits by filing fraudulent unemployment claims in the names of living and deceased victims from Maryland and Arizona. Akinyemi and his co-conspirators used the mailing address of his Landover residence, as well as the home address of a Washington D.C. client to whom Akinyemi provided at-home nursing care services to receive the fraudulent unemployment insurance debit cards in the mail. A total of nine unemployment insurance claims were filed using the address of Akinyemi’s D.C. nursing care client. As stated in his plea agreement, 10 CARES Act Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (“PUA”) claims were filed with the state of Maryland using Akinyemi’s Landover residence as the mailing address, with an intended loss of more than \$170,000.

In total, Akinyemi and his co-conspirators used the identities of 19 real individuals to file fraudulent CARES Act unemployment insurance and PUA claims, causing an actual loss of more than \$7,000, and an intended loss of \$250,000 in state and federal benefits.

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>.

The [Pandemic Response Accountability Committee \(PRAC\)](#) Fraud Task Force was established to serve the American public by promoting transparency and facilitating coordinated oversight of the federal government's COVID-19 pandemic response. The PRAC Fraud Task Force brings together agents from its 22 member Inspectors General to investigate fraud involving a variety of programs, including the Paycheck Protection Program. Task force agents who are detailed to the PRAC receive expanded authority to investigate pandemic fraud as well as tools and training to support their investigations.

The Department of Justice runs the National Elder Fraud Hotline at 1-833-FRAUD-11 (1-833-372-8311), has an [interactive tool](#) for elders who have been financially exploited to help determine to which agency they should report their incident, and also a [senior scam alert website](#). Victims are encouraged to file a complaint online with the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center at this [website](#) or by calling 1-800-225-5324. Elder fraud complaints may be filed with the FTC at www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov or at 877-FTC-HELP.

United States Attorney Erik L. Barron commended HSI, the DOL-OIG, and the Prince George's County Police Department for their work in the investigation. Mr. Barron thanked Assistant U.S. Attorney Rajeev R. Raghavan, who is prosecuting the case.

For more information on the Maryland U.S. Attorney's Office, its priorities, and resources available to help the community, please visit www.justice.gov/usao-md and <https://www.justice.gov/usao-md/community-outreach>.

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Topic(s):
Coronavirus
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Financial Fraud

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