

PRESS RELEASE

Owner of Boston Pizzeria Chain Charged With Defrauding U.S. Small Business Administration

Wednesday, April 10, 2024

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Massachusetts

BOSTON – The owner of Stash’s Pizza, who is currently facing alleged federal forced labor charges, has been indicted by a grand jury in Boston for allegedly submitting false information to the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to obtain a loan on behalf of a business he no longer owned.

Stavros Papantoniadis, a/k/a “Steve Papantoniadis,” 49, of Westwood, was indicted on two counts of wire fraud. Papantoniadis, who is currently in federal custody on the alleged forced labor charges, will make an initial appearance in federal court in Boston at a later date.

According to court documents, Papantoniadis is the owner and operator of Stash’s Pizza, a chain of pizzerias in greater Boston. In April 2021, Papantoniadis sold one of his pizzerias located in Randolph, Mass., and the Secretary of State subsequently cancelled the limited liability company through which Papantoniadis owned the Randolph pizzeria.

Between November 2021 and January 2022, Papantoniadis allegedly applied for an Economic Injury Disaster Loan from the SBA. These loans were designed to provide relief for small businesses that suffered substantial economic injury during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is alleged that, in his submissions to the SBA, Papantoniadis falsely represented that he still owned and operated Boston Pizza Company in Randolph, claiming that he had 18 employees. However, Papantoniadis had allegedly sold the business several months before he applied for the loan. The SBA approved the loan and sent Papantoniadis \$499,900.

[In March 2023](#), Papantoniadis was arrested and charged with one count of forced labor.

He was subsequently [indicted by a federal grand jury](#) on four counts of forced labor and three counts of attempted forced labor. He has remained in federal custody since his arrest. Papantoniadis has pleaded not guilty in this case and is awaiting trial, which is scheduled for May 20, 2024.

The charges of wire fraud provide for a sentence of up to 20 years in prison, up to five years of supervised release and a fine of up to \$250,000. The charges of forced labor and attempted forced labor, which are contained in a separate indictment, provide for a sentence of up to 20 years in prison, up to five years of supervised release and a fine of up to \$250,000. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and statutes which govern the determination of a sentence in a criminal case.

Acting U.S. Attorney Joshua S. Levy; Michael J. Krol, Special Agent in Charge of Homeland Security Investigations in New England; Jonathan Mellone, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, Northeast Region made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Timothy E. Moran, Chief of the Organized Crime & Gang Unit and Brian A. Fogerty of the Civil Rights & Human Trafficking Unit are prosecuting 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 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> and <https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus/combatingfraud>.

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 via the [NCDF Web Complaint Form](#).

The details contained in the charging documents are allegations. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

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