

Press Release

Double-dealing duo sentenced for mortgage and investment fraud scheme

Friday, January 30, 2026

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of Virginia

ALEXANDRIA, Va. – Two former financial services specialists were sentenced for conspiracy to commit mail and wire fraud affecting financial institutions relating to their unlawful use of client information to obtain loans.

According to court documents, Roberta Leigh Dawson, aka Bird, 63, formerly of Alexandria and current resident of Norlina, North Carolina, was a licensed loan officer with a local mortgage brokerage, and Edward Fitzgerald, 59, of Fairfax, purported to be a financial advisor with an expertise in real estate transactions and investments. Fitzgerald's clients provided him with access to their money, financial information, and means of identification.

Fitzgerald passed his clients' information to Dawson to obtain fraudulent real estate loans. In some instances, Fitzgerald and Dawson sold their victims' homes without their knowledge, including to straw buyers. They would then strip out the equity and use it to pay their own expenses, among other things. They also used their victims' personal information without their knowledge to obtain loans in their names and submitted to financial institutions loan applications that were replete with misstatements.

Dawson withdrew hundreds of thousands of dollars of victim cash from accounts she controlled after fraudulently diverting the funds into those accounts. Dawson routinely paid Fitzgerald's credit card, which he used for extravagant travel, luxury items, and daily expenses, with more than \$1 million in funds obtained from the fraud scheme.

Dawson pled guilty on Sept. 24, 2025, and was sentenced today to two years and six months in prison. Fitzgerald pled guilty on Sept. 16, 2025, and was sentenced on Jan. 20 to five years in prison.

The FBI Washington Field Office investigated this case.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Russell L. Carlberg and Annie Zanolini and former Assistant U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Hood for the Eastern District of Virginia and Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Kimberly Pedersen, from Federal Housing Finance Agency, Office of Inspector General, prosecuted the case.

A copy of this press release is located on the website of the [U.S. Attorney's Office](#) for the Eastern District of Virginia. Related court documents and information are located on the website of the [District Court](#) for the Eastern District of Virginia or on [PACER](#) by searching for Case No. 1:25-cr-145.

Contact

USAVAE.Press@usdoj.gov

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