

Man Charged for \$2M COVID-19 Relief Fraud Scheme

Tuesday, December 19, 2023

For Immediate Release

A criminal complaint was unsealed today charging a New Jersey man for his alleged participation in a scheme to obtain, through multiple fraudulent loan applications, more than \$2 million in COVID-19 relief money guaranteed by the U.S. Small Business Administration through the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) Program under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, and to launder the money through a series of financial transactions.

According to court documents, Nikenson Jean Mathurin, also known as Nik Mathurin and Jean Mathurin, 44, of Sparta, allegedly submitted false and fraudulent loan PPP and EIDL Program applications on behalf of five purported business — Innovation Partners Plus Inc., Opulence Motor Group LLC, OMG Collision Corp. (doing business as Corsa Volante), Tricon Systems LTC, and America Home Care LLC — to four lenders. In support of these applications, Mathurin allegedly provided false and fraudulent documents and information to the lenders, including fabricated tax documents, payroll documents, and number of employees.

Mathurin also used the allegedly fraudulent proceeds to, among other things, send money between his various bank accounts, buy restaurant equipment unrelated to any of his purported businesses, pay for travel expenses, and transfer money to an account at an online vehicle auction company, which was used to buy luxury cars, motorcycles, and motorcycle parts.

Mathurin is charged with one count of wire fraud and one count of money laundering. If convicted, he faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison on the wire fraud count and 10 years in prison on the money laundering count.

Acting Assistant Attorney General Nicole M. Argentieri of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, U.S. Attorney Philip R. Sellinger for the District of New Jersey, Special Agent in Charge Robert Manchak of the Federal Housing Finance Agency Office of Inspector General (FHFA-OIG) Northeast Region, and Special Agent in Charge Tammy Tomlins of the IRS Criminal Investigation's (IRS:CI) Newark Office made the announcement.

FHFA-OIG and IRS:CI are investigating the case.

Trial Attorney David D. Hamstra of the Criminal Division's Fraud Section and Assistant U.S. Attorney Fatime M. Cano for the District of New Jersey are prosecuting the case.

The Fraud Section leads the Criminal Division's prosecution of fraud schemes that exploit the PPP. Since the inception of the CARES Act, the Fraud Section has prosecuted over 200 defendants in more than 130 criminal cases and has seized over \$78 million in cash proceeds derived from fraudulently obtained PPP funds, as well as numerous real estate properties and luxury items purchased with such proceeds. More information can be found at www.justice.gov/criminal-fraud/ppp-fraud.

In May 2021, the Attorney General established the COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Task Force to marshal the resources of the Justice Department 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 www.justice.gov/coronavirus.

Anyone with information about allegations of attempted fraud involving COVID-19 can report it by calling the Justice Department's National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) Hotline via the NCDF Web Complaint Form at www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form.

A criminal complaint is merely an allegation. All defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

Updated December 19, 2023