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District of Oregon

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Wednesday, December 15, 2021

Oregon Dentist Faces Federal Charges for Stealing Nearly \$8 Million in COVID-Relief Program Funds

PORTLAND, Ore.—A federal criminal complaint was unsealed today charging an Oregon dentist with fraudulently converting to his personal use nearly \$8 million in loans intended to help small businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Salwan Adjaj, 43, a former dentist residing in West Linn, Oregon, has been charged with aggravated identity theft and wire fraud.

According to court documents, in and around March 2021, Adjaj allegedly submitted dozens of fraudulent loan applications to the Small Business Administration (SBA) in an attempt to obtain funds through the Economic Impact Disaster Loan (EIDL) program. The EIDL program was one of several economic relief programs originally authorized by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES). It enabled SBA to issue low-interest loans to small businesses adversely impacted by the pandemic and associated mitigation measures.

Adjaj used the names and employer identification numbers (EIN) of fictitious business entities on the fraudulent EIDL applications. He further provided false information about the business start dates, number of employees, and locations, and the identities of the purported applicants and business owners. Most of the fraudulent applications were submitted in other peoples' names, but with Adjaj's personal residence as the business mailing address. All of the applications were submitted online from an internet protocol (IP) address associated with Adjaj's dental practice.

After SBA rejected most of Adjaj's EIDL applications, he shifted his sights to the Restaurant Revitalization Fund (RRF), a pandemic economic relief program aimed at supporting restaurants, bars, and other food- and drink-related businesses. The RRF program was authorized by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) in March 2021. Adjaj had substantially greater success stealing RRF funds than he did EIDL. In May 2021, Adjaj submitted three RRF applications for restaurants allegedly located Sarasota, Miami, and Daytona Beach, Florida. Like his fraudulent EIDL applications, Adjaj's RRF applications contained false business information and all listed his personal residence as the business mailing address. Together, Adjaj's RRF applications generated nearly \$8 million in fraudulent loan payouts.

Adjaj was arrested yesterday following alleged pretrial release violations. Today, he was ordered detained pending further court proceedings.

Acting U.S. Attorney Scott Erik Asphaug of the District of Oregon made the announcement.

This case was investigated by the U.S. Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA), the SBA Office of Inspector General, the U.S. Secret Service, and the FBI. Assistant U.S. Attorney Ryan W. Bounds is prosecuting the case.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act is a federal law enacted on March 29, 2020, designed to provide emergency financial assistance to the millions of Americans who are suffering the economic effects caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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 at 866-720-5721 or via the NCDF Web Complaint Form at: <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form>.

A criminal complaint is only an accusation of a crime, and a defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

Topic(s):

Financial Fraud

Component(s):

USAO - Oregon

Updated December 15, 2021