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**Department of Justice**

Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, April 11, 2022

**Former Department of Homeland Security Employee Convicted of Scheme to Defraud the United States**

**Charges Involved Theft of Proprietary Software and Sensitive Databases from U.S. Government**

A former Acting Branch Chief of the Information Technology Division of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS-OIG) was convicted today by a jury of multiple federal charges stemming from the theft of proprietary software and sensitive databases from the U.S. government.

Murali Y. Venkata, 56, of Aldie, Virginia, was convicted of conspiracy to defraud the U.S. government, theft of government property, wire fraud, aggravated identity theft, and obstruction. Venkata, along with co-conspirators Charles K. Edwards, who previously served as the Acting Inspector General of DHS-OIG, and Sonal Patel, another official at DHS-OIG, executed a scheme to steal confidential and proprietary software from the government along with the personally identifying information (PII) of hundreds of thousands of federal employees. Venkata worked for DHS-OIG from June 2010 until he was placed on administrative leave in October 2017 following the charges in this case, including serving for a period as an Acting Branch Chief in the Information Technology Division. Before he joined DHS-OIG, Venkata worked at the U.S. Postal Service's Office of Inspector General (USPS-OIG). At both agencies, Venkata had access to software systems, including one used for case management and other systems holding PII of federal employees.

Edwards pleaded guilty in January 2022 and Patel pleaded guilty in April 2019 to stealing property from the U.S. government for the purpose of developing a commercial version of a case management system to be offered for sale to government agencies. Venkata was convicted for his role in the conspiracy, which included exfiltrating proprietary source code and sensitive databases from DHS-OIG facilities, as well as assisting Edwards in setting up three computer servers in Edwards's residence so that software developers in India could access the servers remotely and develop the commercial version of the case management system.

Assistant Attorney General Kenneth A. Polite, Jr. of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, U.S. Attorney Matthew M. Graves for the District of Columbia, Inspector General Joseph V. Cuffari of DHS-OIG, and Inspector General Tammy Whitcomb of USPS-OIG made the announcement.

Senior Litigation Counsel Victor R. Salgado and Trial Attorney Celia Choy of the Criminal Division's Public Integrity Section and Assistant U.S. Attorney Christine M. Macey, of the Fraud, Public Corruption, and Civil Rights Section of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia prosecuted the case. Assistant U.S. Attorney David B. Kent, also of the Fraud, Public Corruption, and Civil Rights Section for the District of Columbia, provided significant assistance in the investigation of this matter.

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