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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Northern District of Georgia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Nigerian woman sentenced for scamming Social Security Administration and FEMA out of nearly a million dollars

ATLANTA - Ivie Shevon Sajere has been sentenced for her role in a conspiracy that defrauded the Social Security Administration ("SSA") and the Federal Emergency Management Agency ("FEMA") out of nearly \$1,000,000. The conspiracy involved the false filing of thousands of online applications for SSA retirement benefits and FEMA disaster benefits using stolen personal information.

"This was a massive fraud that impacted two government agencies and harmed thousands of victims across the country whose identities were stolen," said U.S. Attorney Kurt R. Erskine. "Sajere's prison sentence is the culmination of a complicated investigation and prosecution and serves as a cautionary tale to other fraudsters similarly minded."

"This sentence holds Sajere accountable for her role in this complex conspiracy to defraud the Social Security Administration, alone, of nearly seven hundred thousand dollars. She stole personal information of innocent people and used it to defraud the SSA by abusing its online services," said Gail S. Ennis, Inspector General, for the Social Security Administration. "My office will continue to uphold the integrity of the SSA's online services and programs that so many Americans rely on. I thank the United States Postal Inspection Service, the Department of Homeland Security Office of the Inspector General, and Homeland Security Investigations, and other law enforcement agencies for joining us in this comprehensive investigation. I also thank the U.S. Attorney's Office for prosecuting this case."

"Anyone with malicious intent can cause widespread damage to victims, and in this case, the defendant orchestrated an identity theft spree that resulted in the defrauding of two agencies that provide substantial assistance to individuals in need," said Tommy D. Coke, Inspector in Charge of the Atlanta Division, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. "This scheme highlights the importance of national collaboration when it comes to combatting identity theft, and I thank our law enforcement partners for their essential assistance with this investigation."

According to U.S. Attorney Erskine, the charges and other information presented in court: Beginning in approximately June 2017 until September 2018, the defendant and her husband, Neville Sajere, both Nigerian nationals who engaged in marriage fraud in an unsuccessful attempt to become U.S. citizens, participated in a money laundering scheme that defrauded nearly a million dollars from SSA and FEMA.

The scheme involved unknown fraudsters filing applications for Social Security retirement benefits and FEMA disaster relief benefits using stolen personal information. The individual victims whose personal information was stolen were often individuals highly acclaimed in their fields. It appears that these individuals were targeted because, even though they were of retirement age, they had not filed for SSA retirement benefits and did not need disaster benefit relief. Thus, the fraudsters had a better chance of getting the applications approved. The victims included a movie director, an award-winning journalist, the daughter of a legendary movie director, and a highly esteemed academic.

Once an application was approved, the fraudsters directed that the funds be deposited onto a Green Dot debit card opened using other stolen personal information. As soon as the money hit the Green Dot debit card, the defendant generated payments through Square, Stripe, and PayPal to Nevada Bridge TV, a Nigerian streaming service/television production company owned by the defendant's husband; BAGMA, an African gospel award show business owned by the defendant's husband; and Shevonz, a clothing store owned by the defendant.

Ivie Shevon Sajere (a/k/a Ivie Shevon Owubo), 38, Suwanee, Georgia, was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Timothy C. Batten, Sr., to two years, six months in prison. She was also ordered to pay \$949,616.40 in restitution to SSA and FEMA. Sajere was remanded into custody at the close of the sentencing hearing to begin her sentence. Because Sajere is not a United States citizen, she is likely to be deported after she completes her sentence. Sajere pleaded guilty on November 30, 2021, to one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering.

This case was investigated by the Social Security Administration – Office of Inspector General, Department of Homeland Security – Office of Inspector General, and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

Diane C. Schulman, Special Assistant U.S. Attorney, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Samir Kaushal prosecuted the case.

For further information please contact the U.S. Attorney's Public Affairs Office at USAGAN.PressEmails@usdoj.gov or (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is <http://www.justice.gov/usao-ndga>.

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