
THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
NORTHERN DISTRICT *of* FLORIDA

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Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Northern District of Florida

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Former Federal Transportation Security Administration (TSA) Officer Sentenced To 6 Months In Federal Prison For Theft Of Public Money

TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA – Louis Paiva, Jr., 29, of Dearborn, Michigan (formerly of Orlando, Florida), was sentenced to 6 months in federal prison after having pleaded guilty to one count of theft of public money. Jason R. Coody, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Florida announced the sentence.

“The theft of any amount of taxpayer funds is inexcusable, especially when the public trust is violation by a government employee,” said U.S. Attorney Coody. “Today’s sentence both punishes the defendant’s criminal conduct and should serve as a significant deterrent to others who would steal from their fellow citizens to unlawfully enrich themselves. With our law enforcement partners, we remain committed to investigating and prosecuting those who engage in acts of covid-related fraud.”

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Office of Inspector General (OIG) COVID Fraud Unit conducted an investigation focused on identifying DHS employees who had received Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits while also being paid by DHS. The investigation revealed that between March 15, 2020, and March 8, 2021, a total of \$16,435.00 in UI assistance (including COVID-19 pandemic relief benefits) was deposited into a bank account that was used by Paiva. During this timeframe, Paiva worked as a Transportation Security Officer for the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) at the Orlando International Airport in Orlando, Florida. Records obtained from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (FL-DEO), which administered the UI program in Florida, revealed that Paiva submitted approximately 24 applications and recertifications to FL-DEO in which he falsely stated that he was not a federal civilian employee, or that he did not work or earn money during the applicable timeframes.

“Federal employees are entrusted to protect the integrity of our programs,” said DHS Inspector General Joseph V. Cuffari. “Today’s sentencing sends a clear message that those who betray that trust will be held accountable for their actions.”

Paiva's prison sentence will be followed by 2 years' supervised release. The Court also ordered Paiva to pay \$16,435.00 in restitution to the FL-DEO.

This conviction was the result of a joint investigation conducted by Department of Homeland Security-Office of Inspector General and the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity. Assistant United States Attorney Justin M. Keen prosecuted the case.

In March 2020, the President signed the Families First Coronavirus Response Act and the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, which expanded states' ability to provide UI for many workers impacted by COVID-19, including for workers who were not ordinarily eligible for benefits.

On May 17, 2021, the Attorney General established the COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Task Force to marshal the resources of the Department of Justice 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, among other methods, 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 <https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus>.

Anyone with information about allegations of attempted fraud involving COVID-19 can report it by calling the Department of Justice'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>.

The United States Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Florida is one of 94 offices that serve as the nation's principal litigators under the direction of the Attorney General. To access public court documents online, please visit the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Florida website. For more information about the United States Attorney's Office, Northern District of Florida, visit <http://www.justice.gov/usao/fln/index.html>.