PRESS RELEASE

Utah Man Charged in $2.8 Million Wire Fraud Scheme

Thursday, February 8, 2024

For Immediate Release
Office of Public Affairs

Defendant Allegedly Impersonated Federal Agent, Attorney and Others to Perpetrate Scheme

A federal grand jury in Salt Lake City returned an indictment, unsealed yesterday, charging a Utah man with wire fraud, making a false statement, impersonating a federal officer and aggravated identity theft.

According to the indictment, from 2018 to 2020, Santiago Garcia Gutierrez allegedly falsely promised his victim that he could acquire at discounted prices exotic cars, planes and vessels that had been seized by the U.S. government through forfeiture. Garcia allegedly promised the victim that he would transfer these luxury assets to them in exchange for earnest money payments. Garcia allegedly assured the victim that those payments would be paid to the U.S. government, but instead he kept the money. To lure his victim into participating in the scheme, on numerous occasions, Garcia allegedly contacted the victim via text message from multiple phone numbers and falsely claimed to be a confidential government informant, federal agent or Garcia’s own attorney. The indictment alleges that Garcia furthered his scheme by lying to an IRS special agent.

In total, Garcia allegedly defrauded the victim of approximately $2.8 million.

If convicted, he faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison for wire fraud, five years in prison for making a false statement, three years in prison for impersonating a federal officer and two years in prison for aggravated identity theft. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.
Acting Deputy Assistant Attorney General Stuart M. Goldberg of the Justice Department’s Tax Division and U.S. Attorney Trina A. Higgins for the District of Utah made the announcement.

IRS Criminal Investigation, the Department of Homeland Security’s Office of the Inspector General and the Environmental Protection Agency are investigating the case.

Trial Attorneys Richard M. Rolwing and Erika V. Suhr of the Justice Department’s Tax Division are prosecuting the case.

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

Updated February 8, 2024

Topics

FINANCIAL FRAUD   TAX

Components

Tax Division | USAO - Utah

Press Release Number: 24-159

Related Content

PRESS RELEASE

Texas Man Charged with Filing Tax Returns that Falsely Reported His Cryptocurrency Gains

A federal grand jury indicted a Texas man yesterday with filing false tax returns and structuring cash deposits to avoid currency transaction reporting requirements.
Massachusetts Commercial Fisherman Pleads Guilty to Tax Evasion

A Massachusetts man pleaded guilty to evading taxes on income he earned as a commercial fisherman.

San Diego Restaurant Owner Charged with Tax and COVID-Relief Fraud Schemes

A federal grand jury in San Diego, California returned a superseding indictment charging a California man with wire fraud, conspiracy to commit wire fraud, tax evasion, filing false tax returns...