

# 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

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