

# **Nigerian man sentenced in Boston for using romance scams to steal \$1.3 million from 125 victims**

"A Nigerian man was sentenced yesterday for using various online scams to steal more than \$1.3 million from approximately 125 victims.

Esogie Osawaru, 30, was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge Leo T. Sorokin to six months in prison and two years of supervised release. Osawaru was also ordered to pay \$1,340,516 in restitution and forfeiture. In November 2020, Osawaru pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit mail and wire fraud and one count of money laundering. Osawaru was arrested in June 2020 along with a co-defendant, Nosayamen Iyalekhue.

Osawaru and Iyalekhue participated in a series of romance, pandemic unemployment insurance and other online scams designed to defraud victims by convincing them to send money to accounts controlled by the defendants. Osawaru opened at least six bank accounts using fake foreign passports in the names of aliases but bearing photos of him, to which co-conspirators directed victims to send money. Osawaru and Iyalekhue then rapidly withdrew the victims' money from various bank branches and ATMs, often multiple times during a single day. The victims, who were often elderly, were deprived of thousands of dollars and in some instances, their life savings. The schemes also included collecting unemployment insurance in the name of others during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In March 2021, Iyalekhue was sentenced to 63 months in prison and three years of supervised release after previously

pleading guilty to his role in the scheme.

Acting United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy and Jodi Cohen, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston Division made the announcement. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Kristen A. Kearney and Ian J. Stearns of the Securities, Financial & Cyber Fraud Unit are prosecuting the case.”-Massachusetts Department of Justice.