

Nigerian national living in Massachusetts indicted in connection with romance schemes

A Nigerian national residing in Canton was indicted today by a federal grand jury for his role in a wire and bank fraud conspiracy involving romance scams targeting individuals in the United States.

Mark Arome Okuo, 41, was indicted on one count of conspiracy to commit wire and bank fraud. Okuo was arrested and charged by criminal complaint in March 2021 and has been detained since his arrest.

According to the charging documents, Okuo participated in a conspiracy involving romance scams designed to defraud victims into sending money to accounts he controlled. Criminals perpetrating romance scams create fictitious profiles on online dating or social media websites, gain the trust of potential victims and then direct those victims to transfer money under false pretenses. To further the conspiracy, Okuo allegedly used fake passports in the names of aliases to open bank accounts in and around Boston to receive the proceeds of the romance scams. Okuo then allegedly executed large cash withdrawals from those accounts, generally structured in amounts less than \$10,000, in an effort to evade detection.

The charge of conspiracy to commit wire and bank fraud provides for a sentence of up to 30 years in prison, five years of supervised release and a fine of up to \$1 million or twice the gross gain or loss, whichever is greater. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

Acting United States Attorney Nathaniel R. Mendell and Matthew B. Millhollin, Special Agent in Charge of Homeland Security Investigations in Boston, made the announcement today. Special assistance was provided by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. Assistant U.S. Attorney Ian Stearns of Mendell's Securities, Financial & Cyber Fraud Unit is prosecuting the case.

The details contained in the charging documents are allegations. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.