

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO
EASTERN DIVISION

FILED
RICHARD W. NAGEL
CLERK OF COURT

2021 MAY 12 PM 3:34

U.S. DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DIST. OHIO
EAST. DIV. COLUMBUS

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff,

v.

ERIC AHIEKPOR,

Defendant.

CASE NO. 2:20-CR-94(3)

JUDGE MORRISON

SUPERSEDING INFORMATION

18 U.S.C. § 1956(h)

18 U.S.C. §§ 1343 and 3147(1)

FORFEITURE ALLEGATIONS

THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY CHARGES:

COUNT 1

(Conspiracy to Commit Money Laundering)

1. From in or around March 2018, through March 4, 2020, in the Southern District of Ohio and elsewhere, Defendant **ERIC AHIEKPOR** did knowingly combine, conspire, and agree with Robert K. Asante and Kwame Yeboah, not charged in this Superseding Information, and with other persons known and unknown to the United States Attorney to commit offenses against the United States in violation of 18 U.S.C. §§ 1956 and 1957—namely:

a. to knowingly conduct and attempt to conduct financial transactions affecting interstate commerce and foreign commerce, which transactions involved the proceeds of specified unlawful activity—namely, wire fraud—knowing that the transactions were designed in whole or in part to conceal and disguise the nature, location, source, ownership, and control of the proceeds of specified unlawful activity, and that while conducting and attempting to conduct such financial transactions, knew

that the property involved in the financial transactions represented the proceeds of some form of unlawful activity, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1956(a)(1)(B)(i); and

b. to transport, transmit, and transfer, and attempt to transport, transmit, and transfer funds involving the proceeds of specified unlawful activity—namely, wire fraud—from a place in the United States to or through a place outside the United States, knowing that the funds involved in the transportation, transmission, and transfer represented the proceeds of some form of unlawful activity and knowing that such transportation, transmission, and transfer was designed in whole or in part to conceal and disguise the nature, location, source, ownership, and control of the proceeds of specified unlawful activity, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1956(a)(2)(B)(i); and

c. to knowingly engage and attempt to engage, in monetary transactions by, through or to a financial institution, affecting interstate and foreign commerce, in criminally derived property of a value greater than \$10,000, such property having been derived from a specified unlawful activity—namely, wire fraud—in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1957.

MANNER AND MEANS OF THE CONSPIRACY

2. It was part of the conspiracy that Defendant **ERIC AHIEKPOR** and other members of the conspiracy would launder the proceeds of online romance scams. The perpetrators of the romance scams created several profiles on online dating sites. The scammers then contacted men and women throughout the United States and elsewhere, with whom they cultivated a sense of affection and, often, romance. Having established relationships with the victims, the perpetrators of the romance scams ultimately requested money, ordinarily for investment reasons or need-based reasons. The perpetrators provided account information and directed where the money should be sent. In part, these accounts were controlled by Defendant

ERIC AHIEKPOR. The funds were not used for the purposes claimed by the perpetrators of the romance scams.

3. It was further part of the conspiracy that Defendant **ERIC AHIEKPOR** and other members of the conspiracy established or used companies and bank accounts in the companies' names to launder criminal proceeds.

4. It was further part of the conspiracy that Defendant **ERIC AHIEKPOR** and other members of the conspiracy established or used bank accounts in their names, in the names of family members, and in the names of their companies to launder criminal proceeds.

5. It was further part of the conspiracy that Defendant **ERIC AHIEKPOR** and other members of the conspiracy funneled proceeds from romance scams into the above-described bank accounts and others.

6. It was further part of the conspiracy that Defendant **ERIC AHIEKPOR** and other members of the conspiracy conducted financial transactions which were designed, in whole or in part, to conceal the nature, location, source, ownership, and control of the proceeds. These transactions included, in part, transfers of funds to other accounts by check, cash withdrawals, purchases of official checks, online banking transfers to third parties, transfers by money service business, ATM cash withdrawals in Ghana, ATM cash withdrawals in the United States, wires to individuals and companies in Ghana, wires to companies in China, and wires to companies in the United States. Several of these transactions were also in excess of \$10,000.

7. It was further part of the conspiracy that Defendant **ERIC AHIEKPOR** and other members of the conspiracy transported, transmitted, and transferred wire fraud proceeds from the United States to Ghana. This movement of funds was designed in whole or in part to conceal and disguise the nature, location, source, ownership, and control of the fraud proceeds.

In violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1956(h).

COUNT 2
(Wire Fraud)

GENERAL ALLEGATIONS

At all times relevant to Count 2 of this Superseding Information, unless otherwise stated:

8. Defendant **ERIC AHIEKPOR** resided in the Southern District of Ohio.

9. Premier Choice Health Services LLC was an Ohio domestic limited liability company with a principal place of business in Columbus, Ohio.

10. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (“CARES”) Act was a federal law enacted on March 27, 2020, designed to provide emergency financial assistance to the millions of Americans suffering the economic effects caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The CARES Act expanded the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) Program, which is a program overseen by the United States Small Business Administration.

11. The EIDL Program provided for loan assistance for small businesses. Businesses were permitted to use EIDL proceeds to pay fixed debts, payroll, accounts payable and other bills that could not have been paid had the disaster not occurred.

12. Businesses applied for loans under the EIDL Program directly through an online portal maintained by the SBA. Once loans were approved, the U.S. Treasury directly issued EIDL funds.

13. On or about June 25, 2020, in the Southern District of Ohio, Defendant **ERIC AHIEKPOR** was released pursuant to an order dated on or about June 25, 2020, from the United States District Court for the Southern District of Ohio, Case No. 2:20-CR-94, which order notified Defendant **ERIC AHIEKPOR** of the potential effect of committing an offense while on pretrial release.

14. From on or about June 16, 2020 through at least on or about August 19, 2020, in the Southern District of Ohio and elsewhere, Defendant **ERIC AHIEKPOR** knowingly devised and intended to devise a scheme and artifice to defraud the United States, and to obtain money by means of materially false and fraudulent pretenses, representations, and promises, and attempted to do so.

MANNER AND MEANS

15. It was part of the scheme to defraud that Defendant **ERIC AHIEKPOR** submitted an Economic Injury Disaster Loan application on behalf of Premier Choice Health Services LLC to the Small Business Administration for \$150,000 in COVID-19 disaster-related benefits.

16. It was further part of the scheme to defraud that, in his EIDL application, Defendant **ERIC AHIEKPOR** certified to the Small Business Administration that he would “use all the proceeds of [the] Loan solely as working capital to alleviate economic injury caused by disaster” and to pay certain related UCC fees.

17. It was further part of the scheme to defraud that Defendant **ERIC AHIEKPOR** wrongfully and fraudulently misapplied the proceeds of the Economic Injury Disaster Loan, including by using the proceeds to buy a boat for his personal use and to pay for other expenditures that were in violation of EIDL rules and regulations.

EXECUTION OF THE FRAUD SCHEME

18. On or about June 19, 2020, in the Southern District of Ohio, Defendant **ERIC AHIEKPOR**, having knowingly devised and intended to devise a scheme and artifice to defraud, and to obtain money and property by means of materially false and fraudulent pretenses, representations, and promises, did transmit and cause to be transmitted by means of wire communications in interstate commerce, writings, signs, signals, pictures, and sounds for the purpose of executing such scheme and artifice—namely, wire communications as part of the process to clear a \$32,446.13 check from Defendant **ERIC AHIEKPOR** to Sizzle Marine for the purchase of a 2017 Sun Tracker “Fishin’ Barge 22 DKX” boat, a 90 HP outboard motor, and a boat trailer.

In violation of 18 U.S.C. §§ 1343 and 3147(1).

FORFEITURE ALLEGATION A

19. Paragraphs 1 through 7 are incorporated here.

20. Upon conviction of the offense alleged in Count 1 of this Superseding Information, Defendant **ERIC AHIEKPOR** shall forfeit to the United States, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 982(a)(1), any property, real or personal, involved in the offense as alleged in Count 1, or any property traceable to such property.

21. If, as a result of any act or omission of Defendant **ERIC AHIEKPOR**, the forfeitable property so described, or any portion thereof:

- a. cannot be located upon the exercise of due diligence;
- b. has been transferred or sold to, or deposited with a third party;
- c. has been placed beyond the jurisdiction of the court;
- d. has been substantially diminished in value; or
- e. has been commingled with other property which cannot be divided

without difficulty;

it is the intent of the United States, pursuant to 21 U.S.C. § 853(p) as incorporated by 18 U.S.C. § 982(b)(1), to seek forfeiture of any other property of Defendant **ERIC AHIEKPOR** up to the value of the forfeitable property.

Forfeiture in accordance with 18 U.S.C. § 982(a)(1) and Rule 32.2 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure.

FORFEITURE ALLEGATION B

22. Paragraphs 8 through 18 are incorporated here.

23. Upon conviction of the offense alleged in Count 2 of this Superseding Information, Defendant **ERIC AHIEKPOR** shall forfeit to the United States, under 18 U.S.C. § 981(a)(1)(C) and 28 U.S.C. § 2461(c), any and all property constituting or derived from

proceeds traceable to such violation, including but not limited to a sum of money equal to \$150,000 in United States currency in the form of a forfeiture money judgment.

24. If any of the above-described forfeitable property, as a result of any act or omission of Defendant **ERIC AHIEKPOR**:

- a. cannot be located upon the exercise of due diligence;
- b. has been transferred or sold to, or deposited with a third party;
- c. has been placed beyond the jurisdiction of the court;
- d. has been substantially diminished in value; or
- e. has been commingled with other property which cannot be divided

without difficulty;

it is the intent of the United States, pursuant to 21 U.S.C. § 853(p) as incorporated by 28 U.S.C. § 2461(c), to seek forfeiture of any other property of Defendant **ERIC AHIEKPOR**, up to the value of the forfeitable property.

Forfeiture in accordance with 18 U.S.C. § 981(a)(1)(C) and 28 U.S.C. § 2461(c), and Rule 32.2 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure.

VIPAL J. PATEL
Acting United States Attorney



PETER K. GLENN-APPLEGATE (0088708)
Assistant United States Attorney