

THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
NORTHERN DISTRICT *of* NEW YORK

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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Northern District of New York

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Brooklyn Man Charged with Conspiring to Commit COVID-19 Relief Fraud

ALBANY, NEW YORK – Sean M. Andre, age 30, of Brooklyn, New York, appeared in court today on a complaint alleging that he worked with an Ulster County man to fraudulently obtain more than \$4 million in government-backed loans meant for businesses struggling with the financial effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

The announcement was made by Acting United States Attorney Antoinette T. Bacon; Thomas F. Relford, Special Agent in Charge of the Albany Field Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); Jonathan D. Larsen, Special Agent in Charge, New York Field Office, Internal Revenue Service (IRS)-Criminal Investigation; and Amaleka McCall-Brathwaite, Special Agent in Charge of the Eastern Region of the Office of Inspector General for the Small Business Administration (SBA-OIG).

A criminal complaint alleges that between June 24, 2020 and August 13, 2020, Andre and [Jean R. Lavanture](#) fraudulently obtained at least \$4,184,781 in Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans, which were paid out to companies that Lavanture controls. According to the complaint, Andre and Lavanture worked together to submit loan applications that fraudulently claimed that Lavanture operated multiple companies each employing dozens of people and paying out millions of dollars in salaries per year. In fact, according to the complaint, none of these companies has ever reported employees to the New York State Department of Labor, nor reported income to the IRS. Lavanture paid Andre at least \$157,578 for Andre's role in the scheme.

The complaint charges Andre with conspiracy to commit bank fraud, conspiracy to commit wire fraud, and engaging in transfers of wire fraud and bank fraud proceeds of a value greater than \$10,000. The charges in the complaint are merely accusations. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

Andre appeared today in Albany before United States Magistrate Judge Christian F. Hummel, and was ordered released with conditions.

If convicted of all of the charges set forth in the complaint, Andre faces up to 30 years in prison, up to 5 years of post-imprisonment supervised release, and a maximum fine of the greater of \$1 million or twice his gross pecuniary gain or his victims' gross pecuniary loss. A defendant's sentence is imposed by a judge based on the particular statute the defendant is charged with violating, the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other factors.

Lavanture, age 48, of Saugerties, New York, is charged by indictment with three counts of bank fraud. The indictment also seeks the forfeiture of assets that Lavanture allegedly obtained from his fraudulent scheme, including a mansion and estate in Byram Township, New Jersey; \$614,479.70 in cash that federal agents found in the New Jersey mansion; a motel in Rockaway Beach, Missouri; a 2007 Bentley Continental GTC; and the funds in 17 bank accounts. The charges in the indictment are merely accusations. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

This case is being investigated by the FBI, IRS-Criminal Investigation, and SBA-OIG, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Michael Barnett and Joshua R. Rosenthal.

Topic(s):

Coronavirus

Financial Fraud

Component(s):

USAO - New York, Northern

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