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EASTERN DISTRICT *of* VIRGINIA

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**Department of Justice**

U.S. Attorney's Office

Eastern District of Virginia

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, January 12, 2022

## **Couple Pleads Guilty to \$5.1 M Pandemic Loan Fraud**

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. – A couple who formerly resided in Hampton pleaded guilty today to submitting fraudulent disaster-related loan applications in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to court documents, Malik Mitchum, 26, and Jenna Mitchum, 25, worked together to obtain disaster-related loan benefits in the form of Small Business Administration (SBA) sponsored Economic Injury Disaster loans (EIDL) and Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans. These programs, initiated and expanded under The Cares Act, are designed to provide support for small businesses for expenses related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Malik and Jenna Mitchum falsely claimed that they were owners of at least five small businesses struggling during the pandemic. In reality, Malik Mitchum was a junior enlisted member of the Air Force and Jenna Mitchum was unemployed.

Between March 2020 and May 2021, Malik and Jenna Mitchum submitted at least 19 fraudulent applications for pandemic-related loan benefits that contained false statements and misrepresentations about their income, employment, and claimed business entities. They are further linked to more than 20 other fraudulent loan applications by the IP address used to submit the applications or wire transfers of fraud proceeds. They intended to defraud the government out of more than \$5.1 million and caused an actual loss to the United States and participating financial institutions of more than \$1.4 million. Malik and Jenna Mitchum spent much of the fraud proceeds they obtained on luxury purchases, like a Rolex watch for \$38,743.00.

Malik and Jenna Mitchum pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit wire fraud affecting a financial institution. They both face a maximum penalty of 30 years in prison. Malik and Jenna Mitchum are scheduled to be sentenced on July 29. Actual sentences for federal crimes are typically less than the maximum penalties. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after taking into account the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

Jessica D. Aber, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia; Brian Dugan, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI's Norfolk Field Office; and Brig. Gen. Terry L. Bullard, Commander of the Office of Special Investigations for the U.S. Air Force and Space Force, made the announcement after U.S. Magistrate Judge Robert J. Krask accepted the plea.

Assistant U.S. Attorney D. Mack Coleman is prosecuting the case.

On May 17, 2021, the Attorney General established the COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Task Force to marshal the resources of the Department of Justice in partnership with agencies across the government to enhance efforts to combat and prevent pandemic-related fraud. The Virginia Coronavirus Fraud Task Force is a federal and state partnership led by the Eastern and Western Districts of Virginia along with fraud investigators from the FBI and Virginia State Police. The task force's mission is to identify, investigate, and prosecute fraud related to the ongoing pandemic. The task force reviews and investigates all credible leads of fraud associated with COVID-19, focusing on schemes to exploit vulnerable populations, including the elderly and concerned citizens. On May 17, 2021, Attorney General Merrick Garland established the [COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Task Force](#), led by the Deputy Attorney General, to bring together the full resources of the federal government to bolster fraud enforcement efforts.

A copy of this press release is located on the website of the [U.S. Attorney's Office](#) for the Eastern District of Virginia. Related court documents and information are located on the website of the [District Court](#) for the Eastern District of Virginia or on [PACER](#) by searching for Case No. 4:21-cr-85.

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**Topic(s):**

Coronavirus

Financial Fraud

**Component(s):**

[USAO - Virginia, Eastern](#)

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