



Homeland Security Investigations
Office of the Special Agent in Charge

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
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NEWS RELEASE

HSI New York multi-agency investigation results in charges against 16 people in connection with transnational ‘grandparent scam’ operated from Dominican Republic

April 30, 2024

NEW YORK – An HSI New York investigation, in coordination with the Justice Department’s Consumer Protection Branch; the United States Attorney for the District of New Jersey; Social Security Administration (SSA) Office of the Inspector General (OIG), Boston-New York Field Division; the FBI’s Criminal, Cyber, Response and Services Branch; and the New York Police Department has led to charges against 16 individuals accused of a sprawling “grandparent scam” to defraud hundreds of elderly Americans out of millions of dollars, Acting Special Agent in Charge Darren B. McCormack [announced today](#).

Eleven men from the Dominican Republic are charged in a 19-count indictment with mail and wire fraud conspiracy; wire fraud; mail fraud; conspiracy to commit money laundering; and money laundering:

1. *Juan Rafael Parra Arias, aka “Yofre,” 41
2. Nefy Vladimir Parra Arias, aka “Keko,” 39
3. Nelson Rafael Gonzalez Acevedo, aka “Nelson Tech,” 35
4. *Rafael Ambiorix Rodriguez Guzman, aka “Max Morgan,” 59
5. Miguel Angel Fortuna Solano, aka “Botija,” aka “Boti,” 41
6. *Felix Samuel Reynoso Ventura, aka “Fili,” aka “Filly The Kid,” 37
7. Carlos Javier Estevez, 45
8. Louis Junior Rodriguez Serrano, aka “Junior,” 27
9. Miguel Angel Vasquez, aka “Miguel Disla,” 24
10. Jovanni Antonio Rosario Garcia, aka “Porky,” aka “Chop,” 45
11. *Jose Ismael Dilone Rodriguez, 34

**Indicates individual is in custody*

According to the investigation, unsealed on April 29, in federal court in Newark, New Jersey, the indicted defendants engaged in a long-running “grandparent” or “family in need of bail” scam against seniors in the United States. The scam was operated from call centers in the Dominican Republic.

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An additional five defendants were charged by complaint with wire fraud conspiracy as part of the same scheme: Endy Jose Torres Moran, 21, of Brooklyn, New York; Ivan Alexander Inoa Suero, 32, of New York, New York; Jhonny Cepeda, 27, of New York, New York; Ramon Hurtado, 43, of New York, New York, and Yuleisy Roque, 21, of the Bronx, New York. All five of the defendants charged by complaint are alleged to have acted as couriers who picked up cash from defrauded victims in New Jersey, New York, and elsewhere.

“Today’s announcement stems from the defendants’ alleged heartless targeting of elderly victims who were collectively tricked into handing over millions of dollars,” said HSI New York Acting Special Agent in Charge Darren B. McCormack. “For their own selfish gain, these accused individuals threatened innocent Americans’ livelihoods, and robbed them of their precious time and any nest eggs they had secured for themselves. I commend HSI New York’s El Dorado Task Force Cyber Intrusion Group, the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of New Jersey, the NYPD, the FBI, the Social Security Office of Inspector General, and HSI Santo Domingo for their outstanding collaboration and coordination. This can truly happen to anybody, and while we will always be there to assist victims, we hope that raising awareness will give these criminal opportunists fewer chances to target the public.”

Acting Special Agent in Charge McCormack credited special agents and investigators with the United States Attorney’s Office for the District of New Jersey, under the direction of U.S. Attorney Sellinger; the Social Security Administration, Office of the Inspector General, New York/Boston Field Division, under the direction of Acting Special Agent-in-Charge Bradley Parker; the New York Police Department, under the direction of Commissioner Caban; and special agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Dennehy in Newark, with the investigation leading to the charges. He also thanked HSI Santo Domingo and their Transnational Criminal Investigative Unit (TCIU), as well as the Justice Department’s Office of International Affairs.

“The Justice Department’s Consumer Protection Branch and its law enforcement partners will vigorously pursue individuals who prey on vulnerable and elderly victims through fraudulent schemes,” said Deputy Assistant Attorney General Arun G. Rao of the Civil Division’s Consumer Protection Branch. “We will continue to identify perpetrators of these schemes and prioritize the pursuit of those who deliberately target vulnerable consumers, whether located in the United States or abroad.”

“As alleged in the indictment and complaint, these defendants facilitated the deception and financial destruction of caring elderly victims by taking advantage of their love for their grandchildren and loved ones,” said U.S. Attorney Philip R. Sellinger for the District of New Jersey. “Combatting elder fraud and protecting the citizens of New Jersey is a top priority for this office and our law enforcement partners. These individuals will be held responsible for preying upon vulnerable elderly Americans. I also hope today’s charges serve to inform our elderly neighbors and their caregivers about this pervasive scam.”

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“Fraud targeting the elderly has a uniquely harmful effect on a segment of the population that is often amongst society's most vulnerable,” said Acting Special Agent in Charge Bradley Parker for the Social Security Administration (SSA) Office of the Inspector General (OIG), Boston - New York Field Division. “SSA OIG is proud to join HSI, the FBI, the Justice Department and the NYPD in investigating these complex, international scams aimed at defrauding SSA beneficiaries.”

“We allege these scammers created an elaborate scheme revolving around a grandchild reaching out to say they were in trouble, had been arrested, and needed help,” FBI – Newark Special Agent in Charge James E. Dennehy said. “Then to reinforce an immediate need for cash, these fraudsters allegedly posed as attorneys, law enforcement officers and court employees explaining how grandparents can get them money. Even the most jaded and savvy of us out there may pause a moment, thinking that this could actually be real. That’s the insidious nature of this particular fraud, criminals are preying on our instinct to protect our families. We ask anyone who believes they could also be a victim to report it at www.ic3.gov.”

“These charges underscore law enforcement’s commitment to protecting our older population from fraudsters and financial exploitation,” said NYPD Commissioner Edward A. Caban. “The crimes outlined here are truly depraved in their nature: targeting our parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles, and others in an elaborate venture to bilk them of their hard-earned savings. I applaud our NYPD investigators and all of our federal partners involved in this important case for their tireless dedication to our shared public safety mission.”

According to the investigation:

Juan Rafael Parra Arias, Nefy Vladimir Parra Arrias, and Gonzalez Acevedo operated a sophisticated network of call centers in the Dominican Republic. Their alleged victims included elderly residents of several states, including New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts. The call centers victimized hundreds of Americans through fraud, stealing millions of dollars.

Members of the conspiracy referred to as “openers” called elderly victims in the United States and impersonated the victims’ children, grandchildren, or other close relatives. The call centers used technology to make it appear that the calls were coming from inside the United States. Typically, the victim was told that their grandchild had been in a car accident, was arrested in connection with an accident, and needed help.

Once openers tricked victims into believing their loved ones were in dire trouble, others working at the call centers, known as “closers,” allegedly impersonated defense attorneys, police officers or court personnel and convinced victims to provide thousands of dollars in cash to help their loved ones.

According to charging documents, closers, including defendants Rodriguez Guzman, Fortuna Solano, Reynoso Ventura and Estevez, typically told victims to give the cash to couriers who they

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sent to victims' homes to collect their money. Other times, closers instructed victims to send the cash by mail.

Once victims were convinced to give cash, call center "dispatchers," including Rodriguez Serrano, Vasquez, Rosario Garcia, and Dilone Rodriguez, recruited and managed a network of U.S.-based couriers to obtain cash from the elderly victims across the northeastern United States.

Those U.S.-based couriers, including the five charged by complaint, typically went to the elderly victims' home to pick up the cash, often using false names and providing victims with fake receipts. The couriers then brought the cash to other members of the conspiracy, who sent the victims' money to the Dominican Republic.

The charges and allegations contained in the indictment and complaint are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

Each of the charges in the indictment and complaint carries a maximum potential penalty of up to 20 years in prison. Each of the mail and wire fraud charges also carry a potential fine of up to \$250,000; each of the money laundering charges also carry a potential fine of up to \$500,000.

About HSI

HSI is the principal investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security, responsible for investigating transnational crime and threats, specifically those criminal organizations that exploit the global infrastructure through which international trade, travel and finance move. HSI's workforce of over 10,400 employees consists of more than 6,800 special agents assigned to 225 cities throughout the United States, and 93 overseas locations in 56 countries. HSI's international presence represents the Department of Homeland Security's largest investigative law enforcement presence abroad and one of the largest international footprints in U.S. law enforcement.

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