

# **Man Sentenced to 72 Months For Bank Fraud Conspiracy, Placed Demands On Alton Resident, Others**

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TAMPA – A Tampa man was sentenced Thursday in a U.S. District Court to 72 months in prison and a \$25,000 fine for his involvement in a bank fraud conspiracy. One victim was from Alton. According to court documents, Jaykumar Patel, 33, worked in Florida moving criminal proceeds for an India-based fraud conspiracy targeting elderly, vulnerable victims in the United States.

“Those who prey on the most susceptible victims through these kinds of scare tactics and phone scams must be punished to the full extent of the law,” said U.S. Attorney Rachelle Aud Crowe. “Defendants both in the United States and overseas need to know that we will protect and defend vulnerable Americans.”

In June 2021, the Alton Police Department filed a report when a resident received a phone call from an individual who claimed to be a member of law enforcement warning her that her identity had been stolen.

The caller demanded the victim to send \$29,000 to an address in Florida so he could help rectify the situation. The story was false: the victim’s identity had not been stolen, the caller was not law enforcement, and no legitimate law enforcement officer would ever demand money from a victim. But the victim didn’t know that, so she sent the money.

A few days later, Patel turned up to pick up the package in Florida and was arrested. Further investigation showed the fraud on the Alton victim was a small part of the criminal scheme.

There were several other victims across the United States who were bullied and frightened out of their hard-earned money. In just a few weeks in 2021, Mr. Patel picked up or intended to pick up packages sent by victims containing more than \$481,000. Individuals should use caution when speaking with strangers on the phone, especially if a caller is asking the person to send money.

“Elder fraud is a growing problem as the country’s population gets older,” said FBI Springfield Field Office Special Agent in Charge David Nanz. “Illinois ranks ninth highest in a total number of victims over age 60, according to the FBI’s Internet Crime Complaint Center 2021 Elder Fraud Report. The FBI takes elder fraud very seriously and, along with our law enforcement partners, will work to hold accountable those who take advantage of the isolation and vulnerability that often surrounds the elderly.”

Legitimate law enforcement will never try to blackmail victims or request residents to send cash by mail. Talk to a family member or someone who can help if something doesn’t sound quite right. There are resources available: National Elder Fraud Hotline: 833-FRAUD-11. The Department of Justice maintains a National Elder Fraud Hotline. Staffed by experienced case managers who provide personalized support to callers, the hotline serves to assist elders and caretakers who believe they have been a victim of fraud by reporting and providing appropriate services. Money Mule Initiative.

In October 2018, the Department and law enforcement partners began a concentrated effort across the country and around the world to disrupt, investigate, and prosecute

money mule activity used to facilitate fraud schemes, especially those victimizing senior citizens.

Money mules are individuals used to move criminal proceeds around on behalf of other criminal actors, and money mules may be knowing or unknowing. Efforts by law enforcement disrupt hundreds of money mule operations every year. The investigation was conducted by the FBI Springfield - Fairview Heights Resident Agency, the St. Petersburg Police Department, and the Alton Police Department. Many other police departments across the United States took statements from victims. Assistant U.S. Attorney Peter Reed prosecuted the case.