



UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
Southern District of New York

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<http://www.justice.gov/usao/nys>

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**MANHATTAN U.S. ATTORNEY AND FBI ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
ANNOUNCE CHARGES AGAINST BROOKLYN MAN IN SCHEME TO
DEFRAUD ELDERLY VICTIMS ACROSS THE UNITED STATES**

Preet Bharara, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and George Venizelos, the Assistant Director-in-Charge of the New York Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI"), announced today the unsealing of a Complaint charging ALLAH JUSTICE MCQUEEN with conspiracy to commit wire fraud in connection with a scheme that targeted and victimized elderly people across the United States. As alleged, MCQUEEN and his co-conspirators tricked each victim, by phone, into believing that the victim's grandchild had just been arrested on a narcotics offense and needed thousands of dollars in bail money immediately to avoid prison. The Complaint describes MCQUEEN's victimization of 17 elderly individuals in New York and across the United States. MCQUEEN was arrested this morning and will be presented later today in federal court in Manhattan.

Manhattan U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara said: "As alleged, Allah Justice McQueen showed no justice to his elderly victims. Instead, he exploited the emotions of vulnerable grandparents by convincing them that those they loved were in trouble and needed money. Not only did he allegedly swindle grandparents out of thousands of dollars, he also caused them considerable emotional distress. We are seeing more and more fraud schemes that target vulnerable people, and we urge you to contact our Victim/Witness Unit if you believe you have been affected."

FBI Assistant Director-in-Charge Venizelos said: "Courtesy and compassion are among the many traits valued by the elderly, making them attractive targets for criminals who seek to capitalize on their trusting nature. McQueen allegedly preyed upon some of society's most vulnerable citizens in a so-called grandparent scam that pinched more than pennies. In this and all cases, justice will certainly come to those who engage in crimes of this nature."

According to the Complaint unsealed today in Manhattan federal court:

Beginning in approximately 2013, MCQUEEN and his co-conspirators perpetrated a scheme to defraud elderly victims around the United States by tricking them into believing their grandchildren had been imprisoned and needed immediate bail money. In particular, in each case, a member of the conspiracy contacted the victim by phone, purported to be a law enforcement official or attorney, and falsely claimed that the victim's grandchild had been taken into custody for a narcotics offense and would not be released unless the victim paid thousands of dollars, and in some cases tens of thousands of dollars, in purported bail money. A member of the conspiracy also frequently posed on the call as the victim's grandchild, typically crying and pleading with the elderly victim to send money to secure the grandchild's release from jail, and asking the victim not to contact any other family members because the grandchild felt ashamed. In each case, in extreme distress, the victim sent thousands of dollars, at a minimum, as instructed, to certain individuals who, among other things, provided that money to MCQUEEN at his direction. In each case, after paying the "bail" money as directed, the victim directly contacted his or her grandchild and thereupon learned that the grandchild had not, in fact, been arrested, that the grandchild knew nothing about the claims made on the call to the victim, and that the call was fraudulent.

For example, among the 17 examples set forth in the complaint, one 79 year-old victim in New York received a phone call in August 2013 from an individual who identified himself as a police sergeant and claimed that the victim's grandson had been arrested after drugs were discovered in a car in which the grandson was a passenger. The purported sergeant said the grandson would be released if the victim sent \$6,000 in bail money as directed. The victim, who briefly heard, on the phone, an individual who sounded like the victim's grandson, wired the money as directed. The victim subsequently spoke directly with the victim's grandson, and learned that he had not been arrested, and knew nothing about the purported sergeant or the basis for his request for bail money. The victim never received any money back from the purported sergeant.

In fact, the victim's money was wired to particular individuals working with MCQUEEN who collected the wired funds on MCQUEEN's behalf and provided the money to MCQUEEN. As to a portion of the victim's money, MCQUEEN appeared personally at a particular location in Brooklyn to arrange for the collection of the proceeds. MCQUEEN subsequently deposited another portion of the money sent by the victim directly into his personal bank account.

* * *

MCQUEEN, 33, of Brooklyn, New York, is charged with one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud, which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison. The maximum potential sentence is prescribed by Congress and is provided here for informational purposes only, as any sentencing of the defendant will be determined by the judge.

Mr. Bharara praised the outstanding investigative work of the FBI.

If you believe you were a victim of this crime, including a victim entitled to restitution, and you wish to provide information to law enforcement and/or receive notice of future developments in the case or additional information, please contact Wendy Olsen-Clancy, the Victim Witness Coordinator at the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of

New York, at (866) 874-8900, or Wendy.Olsen@usdoj.gov. For additional information, go to: <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/nys/victimwitness.html>.

The prosecution of this case is being handled by the Office's Complex Frauds and Cybercrime Unit. Assistant United States Attorney Elisha Kobre is in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Complaint are merely accusations, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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