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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Middle District of Louisiana

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, October 22, 2020

Maryland Woman Sentenced to Federal Prison After Obstructing Justice in Cyber Fraud Investigation

United States Attorney Brandon J. Fremin announced that U.S. District Judge Brian A. Jackson sentenced Fatima Sesay, age 29, of Laurel, Maryland, to serve 16 months in federal prison following her conviction for obstruction of justice. The court also ordered Ms. Sesay to serve two years of supervised release following her release from prison.

Earlier this year, Sesay was convicted of obstruction of justice, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1503, after she made numerous statements intended to mislead and deceive a pending federal grand jury investigation into a computer fraud that affected a business in Greenwell Springs, Louisiana, among other victims. In the underlying fraud, after the victim shipped tens of thousands of dollars' worth of its products to a customer in Amman, Jordan, the customer received a series of fraudulent e-mails directing it to send payment to an account at Wells Fargo Bank. Relying on the messages and wiring instructions, the customer wired the requested funds to the account. The Louisiana-based victim had not sent the e-mails, however, and unbeknownst to the customer, the wiring instructions were fraudulent. The Export-Import Bank of the United States (EXIM Bank) had insured the underlying transaction, and the EXIM Bank's Office of Inspector General quickly began investigating the fraud.

The investigation eventually revealed that in July of 2016, after a series of transactions, the proceeds from the fraud were deposited into a Bank of America account that Sesay had opened in Maryland earlier that year. In fact, between November 2015 and September 2016, across dozens of suspicious transactions, nearly \$500,000 had passed through accounts maintained in the defendant's name. Federal authorities contacted Sesay and made several attempts to secure truthful information from her about her knowledge of the scheme. Instead, as Sesay has admitted, she knowingly obstructed the investigation, first by making numerous evasive and misleading statements in an interview with federal agents in January 2019, and then by providing false testimony before a federal grand jury in Baton Rouge in April 2019. The defendant repeatedly minimized the extent of her relationship with one of the subjects of the investigation and provided false information intended to divert the federal investigation into the underlying

cyber fraud.

U.S. Attorney Fremin stated, “A basic underpinning of our system of justice is that participants on all sides remain open and honest. Candid participation in the criminal justice process is critical to the pursuit of justice, and those who intentionally mislead, obstruct, or lie to a grand jury in our investigations will be held accountable. This conviction and sentence clearly demonstrates how seriously we in the federal system treat those who obstruct justice. I commend our prosecutor and the Export-Import Bank of the United States – Office of Inspector General for their excellent work in this matter.”

EXIM Bank is the official export credit agency of the United States, and assists in financing the export of U.S. goods and services to international markets. Complaints and reports of waste, fraud, and abuse related to EXIM Bank programs and operations can be reported to the OIG hotline at 888-OIG-EXIM (888-644-3946) or via email at IGhotline@exim.gov.

This matter was investigated by the Export-Import Bank of the United States – Office of Inspector General, and was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Alan A. Stevens, who also serves as Senior Litigation Counsel of the Criminal Division.

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