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**SPECIAL DEPUTY UNITED STATES MARSHAL FACING FEDERAL CHARGES FOR MONEY LAUNDERING RELATED TO A ROMANCE SCAM INVOLVING MORE THAN 20 VICTIMS**

*Defendant Alleged to be Connected to \$1.9 Million in Combined Victim Losses*

**Greenbelt**, Maryland – A federal criminal complaint has been filed charging Isidore Iwuagwu, age 35, of Upper Malboro, Maryland, with the federal charge of conspiring to commit money laundering related to numerous online romance scams.

Iwuagwu will have his initial appearance today beginning at 2 p.m., in U.S. District Court in Greenbelt before U.S. Magistrate Judge Timothy J. Sullivan.

The criminal complaint was announced by United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Erek L. Barron; Special Agent in Charge Andrew Hartwell of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of the Inspector General Fraud Detection Office (DOJ-OIG); and Acting Postal Inspector in Charge Tira Hayward of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service - Washington Division (USPIS).

“If you find yourself in an online relationship and you’re asked for a bunch of money, it’s probably fraud not love,” said U.S. Attorney for the District of Maryland, Erek L. Barron. “We’re prosecuting elder fraud, including romance scams, to the fullest extent of the law.”

According to the affidavit filed in support of the criminal complaint, Iwuagwu is a Special Deputy United States Marshal and Department of Justice contractor providing security for critical Department of Justice facilities.

According to the affidavit filed in support of the criminal complaint, between October 2015 and July 2021, Iwuagwu participated in a romance scam in which individuals contacted victims on social media platforms and dating sites, engaged in online relationships with the victims, then convinced victims to send large sums of money claiming the funds were needed for purported personal hardships or shipping costs for various imports. Many victims reported sending funds at the request of individuals claiming to be deployed members of the U.S. Armed Forces who asked for money for various personal hardships. The alleged scam involved more than 20 victims, many of whom are senior citizens. The victims linked to Iwuagwu reported losing a combined \$1.9 million to the scheme.

For example, the affidavit details an account of a victim who was approached on a social media platform by an individual who claimed to be a Major General in the U.S. Army. Eventually, the self-

proclaimed Major General asked Victim F to help him with financial expenses as he transitioned out of the military. Victim F believed the individual was returning to the United States to be with her. At the Major General's request, Victim F sent more than \$300,000 to Iwuagwu who Victim F was told was the Major General's attorney.

In a different case, another victim was contacted by an individual claiming to be a Spanish doctor living in California and who was leaving on a ship to provide medical treatment to individuals in other countries. The individual claimed to not have access to their bank account and asked the victim to send them \$1,120, which the victim did. Following this, the victim wired funds to bank accounts controlled by Iwuagwu and also sent money to Iwuagwu through the mail. In total, the victim estimated sending \$51,880 to Iwuagwu. When the victim began to express doubts about the funds she was sending, the individual sent the victim a photograph of Iwuagwu's Department of Justice contractor credentials to ease her concerns.

As stated in the criminal complaint, law enforcement reviewed 30 accounts controlled by Iwuagwu between 2013 and 2021. During this time, Iwuagwu allegedly received approximately \$1.65 million in wire transfers from 119 individuals and approximately \$1.138 million in other deposits, including money orders, personal checks, cashier's checks and cash. Allegedly, Iwuagwu routinely withdrew the criminal proceeds through structured cash withdrawals or wire transfers to foreign banks. Specifically, Iwuagwu is alleged to have wired more than \$1.5 million from his accounts, including \$200,000 to a Nigerian company, and withdrew approximately \$511,900 through ATM and other cash withdrawals.

If convicted, Iwuagwu faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in federal prison for conspiracy to commit money laundering. 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.

A criminal complaint is not a finding of guilt. An individual charged by criminal complaint is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty at some later criminal proceedings.

The Department of Justice runs the National Elder Fraud Hotline at 1-833-FRAUD-11 (1-833-372-8311), or here, for elders who have been financially exploited to report their incident, and be connected with additional resources and information. Victims are encouraged to file a complaint online with the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center at this website or by calling 1-800-225-5324. Elder fraud complaints may be filed with the FTC at [www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov](http://www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov) or at 877-FTC-HELP.

United States Attorney Erek L. Barron commended the DOJ-OIG and USPIS for their work in the investigation. Mr. Barron thanked Assistant U.S. Attorneys Rajeev R. Raghavan and Jennifer L. Wine, who are prosecuting the federal case.

For more information on the Maryland U.S. Attorney's Office, its priorities, and resources available to help the community, please visit [www.justice.gov/usao-md](http://www.justice.gov/usao-md) and <https://www.justice.gov/usao-md/community-outreach>.

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