

THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
SOUTHERN DISTRICT *of* TEXAS

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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Southern District of Texas

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fourth sentenced in government impersonation call center scam

HOUSTON – A 28-year-old Indian citizen who illegally resided in the United States has received his sentence following his conviction of conspiracy, announced U.S. Attorney Alamdar S. Hamdani.

Moin Idrishbhai Pinjara pleaded guilty Nov. 30, 2021.

Today, U.S. District Judge Andrew S. Hanen imposed a 29-month sentence. Not a U.S. citizen, Pinjara is expected to face removal proceedings following his imprisonment. The court further ordered him to pay \$635,103 in restitution to the victims of the conspiracy.

Between December 2019 and July 2020, Pinjara was a “runner” in an Indian-based call center scam. Callers in India would contact potential victims in the United States to extort money from them. Pinjara would then use aliases and fake identification documents to pick up parcels containing cash which the victims had mailed.

One common script used in the schemes involved coercing victims into believing federal agents were investigating them. The “agent” on the phone would convince the victim the only way to clear his or her name from investigation was to send cash in a parcel package shipped through FedEx to a name and address they provided. Runners like Pinjara in the United States would then pick up the parcels.

Throughout the course of the investigation, law enforcement identified hundreds of victims of this scheme, with total losses exceeding millions of dollars.

The Social Security Administration (SSA) consistently warns people of similar scams and encourages citizens to protect themselves.

Prior to Pinjara’s sentencing today, three other runners had been sentenced in Houston for their involvement in the same conspiracy. Viral Gandhi and Burhan Syed, both 33 and Indian citizens illegally residing in the United States, received 27 and 41 months, respectively. Myisha Carter, 33, Houston, was ordered to serve a 71-month sentence to be immediately followed by three years of supervised release. All must also pay restitution.

The SSA - Office of Inspector General (OIG), FBI and the Department of Homeland Security – OIG conducted the investigation with the assistance of the Houston Police Department and the Treasury

Inspector General for Tax Administration. Assistant U.S. Attorney (AUSA) Stephanie Bauman and Special AUSA Benjamin Sandel prosecuted the cases.

Topic(s):

Financial Fraud

Component(s):

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