

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

District of Columbia

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Virginia Man Sentenced to Federal Prison for Conspiring To Impersonate Federal Law Enforcement Officer

WASHINGTON – Haider Ali, 36, of Springfield, Virginia, was sentenced today to 68 months in prison for his role in a fraud conspiracy that included bank fraud and the impersonation of federal law enforcement, in a scheme that bilked more than \$750,000 from his victims. The sentence was announced by U.S. Attorney Matthew M. Graves, Acting Special Agent in Charge Emily Odom, of the FBI Washington Field Office's Criminal and Cyber Division, Inspector General Dr. Joseph V. Cuffari, of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and Inspector in Charge Damon Wood, with the Washington Division of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

According to court documents, Ali and his co-conspirator, Arian Taherzadeh, 40, of Washington, D.C., impersonated federal officers, using fake identification to rent luxury apartments and cheat the owners out of rent, and to ingratiate themselves with legitimate members of law enforcement. Ali pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court, on October 5, 2022, to the federal charges of conspiracy and bank fraud, and to the unlawful possession of a large-capacity ammunition feeding device, a District of Columbia offense. In addition to the prison term, U.S. District Court Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly ordered 36 months of supervised release and restitution of \$757,922.66.

"Deceptions like this do grave damage to the actual agents and officers who are on the street, dealing with the public whose trust is critical to their safety and success," said U.S. Attorney Graves. "Fortunately, our law enforcement partners moved quickly to stop this defendant, expose his scam, and uncover his million-dollar bank fraud. As this sentence shows, impersonating a member of law enforcement is a serious offense. Those who pretend for the sake of exerting unlawful authority over the public, or for their own financial gain, will face significant consequences."

"Impersonating federal officers is a serious crime. Ali used fake law enforcement credentials to cheat people out of money to fuel his greed and perpetuate his fake persona," said Emily Odom, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the FBI Washington Field Office Criminal and Cyber Division. "Thanks to collaborative efforts with our law enforcement partners, we were able to quickly and effectively dismantle this sophisticated scheme, which not only degraded the operations of real law enforcement but also endangered the safety of the public."

According to court documents, Ali and Taherzadeh operated a business called United States Special Police LLC (USSP), which was described as a private law enforcement, investigative, and protective services company, based in Washington. The two men represented themselves to law enforcement as investigators and/or special agents, claiming an affiliation with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) which was, in fact, not true. The company was not associated in any way with the United States government or the District of Columbia and had never done business with the federal or D.C. governments.

As the scheme unfolded, Ali falsely claimed at various times that he was a member of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and/or the U.S. Secret Service. He also falsely claimed that he participated in the capture of the wife of Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, that his family had a royal bloodline, and that he had a connection to a senior official in the Pakistani Intelligence Service. Taherzadeh, meanwhile, falsely claimed to be, among other things, a Special Agent with the Department of Homeland Security, a member of a multi-jurisdictional federal task force, a former United States Air Marshal, and a former Army Ranger.

Both men used these false claims to recruit others to join their "task force" or "unit," which these individuals believed to be part of DHS and federal law enforcement. In furtherance of the scheme, Ali and Taherzadeh ingratiated themselves with employees of the U.S. Secret Service because it provided them with cover and aided in their scheme.

Ali and Taherzadeh used their assumed law enforcement personas and the business to maintain leases for multiple apartments and parking spaces for supposed law enforcement operations at a luxury apartment complex in Southeast Washington. These units included a penthouse where Ali and Taherzadeh possessed, among other things, a Glock handgun registered to Ali that was loaded with a large-capacity ammunition feeding device, surveillance equipment, law enforcement tactical gear and a machine capable of programming Personal Identification Verification (PIV) cards used to create false credentials. They also used their false identification with law enforcement to obtain security footage in the building, as well as a list of the building's residents, as well as their apartment numbers and contact information.

Throughout their tenancy, no rent was paid on the leased apartments or parking garage. This resulted in a loss to the building of \$295,277, and to the garage of \$7,854.

Additionally, according to the plea documents, beginning as early as May 2017 and continuing through March 2021, Ali engaged in a bank fraud scheme in which he generated more than \$1 million in gross receipts from one or more financial institutions. He used bank accounts that he and others maintained and controlled to falsely and fraudulently execute debit and credit card transactions.

Ali and Taherzadeh were arrested on April 6, 2022. Taherzadeh pleaded guilty on Aug. 1, 2022, to a federal conspiracy offense and two District of Columbia offenses: unlawful possession of a large-capacity ammunition feeding device and voyeurism. Taherzadeh is scheduled to be sentenced on December 1, 2023.

Following the pronouncement of the sentence, Ali was ordered remanded to begin his sentence effective immediately.

This case is being investigated by the FBI's Washington Field Office, the Office of the Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. Valuable assistance was provided by the Metropolitan Police Department and the Naval Criminal Investigative Service. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Elizabeth Aloji and Joshua S. Rothstein of the Fraud, Public Corruption, and Civil Rights Section.

Valuable assistance has been provided by Assistant U.S. Attorney Christopher Tortorice and Paralegal Specialists Quiana Dunn-Gordon, and Lisa Abbe and former Paralegal Specialist Chad Byron of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia, and Trial Attorneys Kathleen Campbell and Evan Turgeon of the Department of Justice's National Security Division.
