

Massachusetts officials seize leopard skins, skulls of orangutan, jaguar, tiger, narwhals; one charged

U.S. also filed action to forfeit more than 100 wildlife parts including orangutan skulls, tiger skulls, jaguar skin and other parts from endangered, threatened, or protected species.

BOSTON – A Reading, Mass. man has been charged with allegedly trafficking in wildlife parts from endangered and protected species.

Adam Bied, 39, is charged with two counts of conspiracy to smuggle goods into the United States, specifically, illegally imported wildlife parts, and three counts of violating the Lacey Act which prohibits trafficking in wildlife. It is alleged that the wildlife was protected by the Endangered Species Act (ESA) as well as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).



Massachusetts Department of Justice photo.

“The illicit trafficking of endangered wildlife for financial gain is a grave offense that poses a significant threat to

global conservation efforts and preservation of these species. Mr. Bied's alleged conduct reflects a blatant disregard for the laws in place to safeguard our planet's biodiversity. These laws and international treaties exist to protect endangered species from exploitation and to maintain ecological balance," said Acting United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy. "In addition to the criminal charges, our office is seeking to forfeit the hundreds of animal parts seized from Mr. Bied's home and a storage unit, including orangutan skulls, tiger skulls and jaguar skins. This forfeiture action sends a clear message that we will not only prosecute those who engage in illegal wildlife trafficking, but also take legal actions to strip them of their ill-gotten gains."

According to court filings, beginning at least from January 2018 until June 2021, Bied bought, sold and traded in wildlife parts and products, with knowledge that many of the transactions were in violation of U.S. laws and regulations and knowingly failed to declare this wildlife upon importation into the United States.

Specifically, Bied allegedly placed orders with individuals in Cameroon and Indonesia who were in the businesses of killing and acquiring wildlife – including endangered and protected species – which he then resold or traded to customers in the United States. Bied did not possess a United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) import/export license or necessary CITES permits, and allegedly failed to declare the wildlife to the USFWS upon import.



Massachusetts Department of Justice photo.

The United States Attorney's Office also filed a civil forfeiture complaint seeking to forfeit over 100 wildlife parts from endangered, threatened, or protected species seized by the USFWS in July 2021 from Bied's residence, storage unit, and a vehicle. As alleged in the civil forfeiture complaint, many of the seized wildlife parts required a CITES permit and/or a USFWS declaration for lawful import and a USFWS import/export license to import wildlife for commercial purposes. Other wildlife parts are alleged to have been acquired in violation of the ESA or the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). The civil forfeiture complaint alleges that the wildlife parts are subject to civil forfeiture under federal law.

The wildlife parts identified in the civil forfeiture complaint include:

- Orangutan skulls;
- Tiger skulls;
- Leopard skin, skulls and claw;
- Jaguar skin and skull;
- African lion skulls;

- Polar bear skull;
- Narwhal tusk;
- Otter skeleton;
- Harp seal skull;
- South American fur seal skull;
- Elephant seal skull;
- Babirusa skulls;
- Mandrillus skulls;
- Wallaby skull; and
- Jackal skull.

Federal wildlife statutes and regulations prohibit international and illegal trade in vulnerable wildlife species. The ESA, the Lacey Act and CITES, as well as the accompanying regulations, prohibit the import, export, possession, transport, purchase and sale of protected species. The restrictions apply to live and dead wildlife specimens, as well as the skins, parts and products made in whole or in part from listed species. Additional documents are also required for wildlife protected by the CITES treaty, which regulates trade in endangered or threatened species through permit requirements.

The lawful importation of vulnerable wildlife species requires a CITES permit(s). The lawful importation of any foreign species requires a USFWS wildlife declaration. Individuals are also required to have a USFWS import/export license to import wildlife for commercial purposes.

The charges of conspiracy as well as the charges under the Lacey Act each provide for a sentence of up to five years in prison, three years of supervised release and a fine of up to \$250,000. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and statutes which govern the determination of a sentence in a criminal case.

Acting U.S. Attorney Levy and Ryan Noel, Special Agent in

Charge of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Law Enforcement, Northeast Region, made the announcement today. This case was worked jointly with the United States Marshals Service and the Department of Justice's Environment and Natural Resources Division's Environmental Crimes Section. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Nadine Pellegrini, Chief of the National Security Unit, is prosecuting the case. Assistant U.S. Attorney Carol E. Head, Chief of the Asset Recovery Unit is prosecuting the civil forfeiture case.

The details contained in the charging document and civil forfeiture complaint are allegations. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law. The United States must establish that the wildlife parts are subject to forfeiture by a preponderance of the evidence."-Massachusetts Department of Justice.

Guatemalan national living Massachusetts sentenced for attempted sex trafficking of 12-year-old child

"BOSTON – A Waltham man was sentenced today in federal court in Boston for attempted sex trafficking of a 12-year-old girl.

Misael Fabian Medina, 38, was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge Denise J. Casper to 15 years in prison. Medina will be subject to deportation proceedings to Guatemala upon completion of his sentence. In March 2024, Medina was convicted by a federal jury of one count of attempted sex

trafficking of a child; and one count of attempted coercion and enticement.

“Children are sold for sex far too often in our society. Our office has prosecuted several individuals who have trafficked minors, often highly vulnerable girls. This prosecution is squarely aimed at addressing the demand that fuels this despicable practicing of selling sex with kids. Medina showed up at a hotel with \$200 in his hand in order to have sex with a 12-year-old girl. This sting operation should send a message to every person using a smart phone to troll for sex with minors, that the federal government is out there aggressively enforcing the laws against this reprehensible conduct,” said Acting United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy.

“Misael Fabian Medina was ready to pay to sexually abuse a 12-year-old child before he was arrested by HSI special agents. Today’s sentence will keep him off the streets and away from children he could harm,” said Michael J. Krol, Special Agent in Charge of Homeland Security Investigations in New England. “Sex trafficking is driven by demand and we work every day with our partners to investigate and bring predators like Medina to justice.”

In November 2022, Misael Medina responded to an online advertisement offering sex with two young girls. Through an ensuing text conversation with undercover agents who were posing as the seller of the two girls, Medina agreed to pay \$200 to engage in a sex act with a 12-year-old girl. Shortly thereafter, Medina went to a greater Boston hotel to meet with the purported seller. Once at the hotel, he met with an undercover agent and confirmed he had the money to pay for the commercial sex act. During that meeting, Medina was arrested and found to be in possession of a box of condoms.

If you or someone you know may be impacted or experiencing commercial sex trafficking, please contact USAMA.VictimAssistance@usdoj.gov.

Acting U.S. Attorney Levy and SAC Krol made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Brian A. Fogerty and Jason A. Casey of the Criminal Division prosecuted the case.”- Massachusetts Department of Justice.

40-year-old wanted New Bedford man captured; allegedly in possession of loaded gun, narcotics

“NEW BEDFORD – Narcotics detectives have arrested a wanted man and found him to have a gun and narcotics in the process.

On the evening of June 12, 2024, Detectives Matthew Couture and Jonathan Miranda were operating in the north-end sector of the city when they observed a vehicle being operated by a male with an active warrant. He was identified as Mr. JONATHAN MARTINEZ, 40, of New Bedford.

Upon stopping the vehicle, MARTINEZ exited and was taken into custody. Further investigation revealed MARTINEZ to have a loaded 9 mm firearm in his center console for which he had no license. He was also found to have a baggie of “crack” cocaine in his pocket.

MARTINEZ was taken into custody and charged with carrying a loaded firearm, possession of crack cocaine, and his original warrant.

If you have any information regarding criminal activity, you can report it anonymously at our website or by calling 508-99-

45-year-old New Bedford man, repeat offender, charged with trafficking Fentanyl

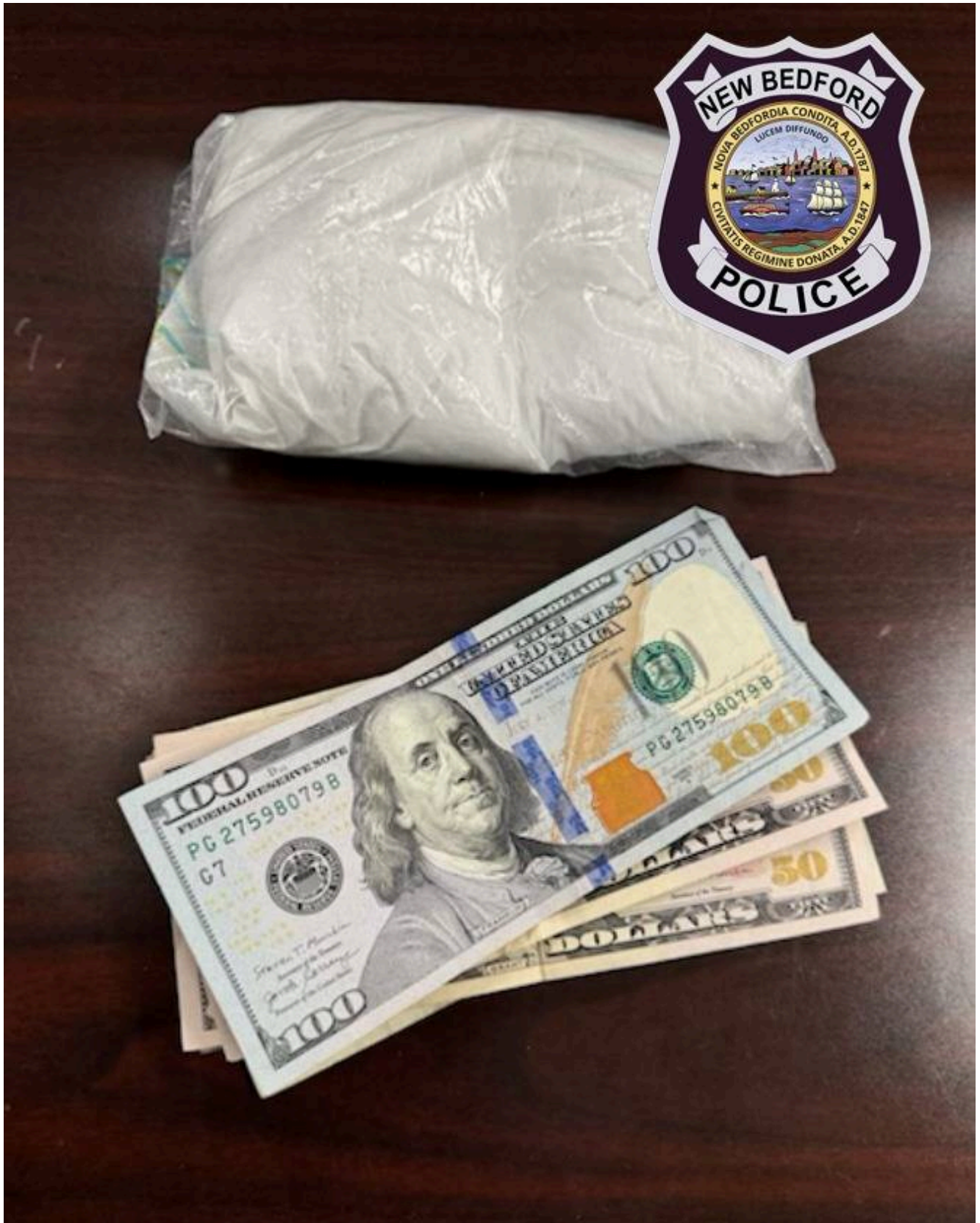
“NEW BEDFORD – A local man has been arrested by narcotics detectives for trafficking Fentanyl.

On Monday, June 10, Det. Emily Pacheco concluded her investigation into a fentanyl distribution operation being conducted out of 113 Reynolds St., first floor, for which she obtained a search warrant. The target of the investigation was JOSE SANTIAGO, 46.

During a search of the residence, detectives located over 200 grams of fentanyl, 5 grams of psychedelic mushrooms, digital scales, packaging materials, and \$215, which was seized due to the nature of the resulting charges.

SANTIAGO was taken into custody and charged with trafficking over 200 grams of fentanyl and possession with intent to distribute class A substance, among other charges. SANTIAGO has a previous conviction of trafficking in heroin and has recently pleaded guilty to drug charges in U.S. District court.

If you have any information regarding criminal activity, you can report it anonymously at our website or by calling 508-99-CRIME.”-City of New Bedford Police Department.



City of New Bedford Police Department photo.

62-year-old New Bedford man pleads guilty to stealing disability benefits for a decade

"BOSTON – A New Bedford man pleaded guilty yesterday in federal court in Boston to fraudulently receiving Social Security disability benefits.

Anthony Patterson, 62, pleaded guilty to one count of theft of government money. U.S. District Court Judge Allison D. Burroughs scheduled sentencing for Sept. 10, 2024. Patterson was charged in May 2024.

From 2013 to 2023, Patterson collected Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits, which are only available to people with limited financial means. During two interviews with the Social Security Administration in 2012 and 2022, Patterson made sworn false statements regarding his marital status and living situation to conceal household income and resources. As a result, he collected \$92,582 in SSI benefits that he was ineligible to receive.

The charge of theft of government money provides for a sentence of up to 10 years in prison, three years of supervised release and a fine of \$250,000 or twice the gross gain or loss, whichever is greater. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and statutes which govern the determination of a sentence in a criminal case.

Acting United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy and Bradley Parker, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the Social Security Administration, Office of Inspector General, Office of Investigations, Boston Field Division made the announcement

today. Special Assistant U.S. Attorney James J. Nagelberg of the Major Crimes Unit is prosecuting the case.”-Massachusetts Department of Justice.

Violent Boston Gang Member Member Who Posed With Firearms on Snapchat Sentenced to More Than Six Years in Prison

A Boston-area man was sentenced on Friday, June 7, 2024 for illegally possessing a firearm while under house arrest for three state firearm charges.

Trevon Bell, 27, of Boston and Lynn, was sentenced by U.S. District Court Chief Judge F. Dennis Saylor IV to 78 months in prison, and three years of supervised release. Bell pleaded guilty to being a felon in possession of a firearm in November 2023.

As part of a 2021 investigation into a violent Boston gang, law enforcement intercepted a Snapchat “chat” comprised of individuals who regularly displayed images of themselves in possession of firearms.

One of the individuals identified in the chat was Bell – a member of the violent Boston-based Heath Street gang. Bell had been indicted on three separate unlawful possession of a firearm and ammunition cases in state court for which he was released on home detention with location monitoring via GPS

bracelet. However, the investigation revealed that, while on state pre-trial release, Bell had posted numerous videos of himself in possession of firearms to Snapchat, including a Nov. 24, 2021 video that showed him in possession of a black semi-automatic Glock 9 millimeter firearm. The firearm has since been recovered:

The operation was conducted is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) Strike Force Initiative, which provides for the establishment of permanent multi-agency task force teams that work side-by-side in the same location. This co-located model enables agents from different agencies to collaborate on intelligence-driven, multi-jurisdictional operations to disrupt and dismantle the most significant drug traffickers, money launderers, gangs, and transnational criminal organizations. More information on the OCDETF program is available here: <https://www.justice.gov/ocdetf/about-ocdetf>.

Acting United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy; James M. Ferguson, Special Agent in Charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, Boston Division; and Stephen Belleau, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration, New England Division made the announcement. Special assistance in the investigation was provided by the Boston, Quincy and Lynn Police Departments and the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department. Assistant U.S. Attorney Christopher Pohl of the Narcotics & Money Laundering Unit prosecuted the case.

Massachusetts man sentenced to prison for threatening interracial couple: “Time for whites to riot!”

Defendant has extensive criminal history and regularly posted white supremacy symbolism on Facebook.

“BOSTON – A Massachusetts was sentenced today for threatening an interracial couple via Facebook Messenger in January 2021, and to attempting to prevent the couple from reporting the threats and harassment to law enforcement.

Stephen M. DeBerardinis, 48, of Boston and Dedham, was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge Allison D. Burroughs to 90 months in prison to be followed by three years of supervised release. In March 2024, DeBerardinis pleaded guilty to one count of transmitting in interstate commerce threats to injure a person; one count of tampering with a witness and victim by intimidation, threats, and corrupt persuasion; and one count of tampering with a witness and victim by harassment.

Time 2020-08-15 09:40:15 UTC

Message [REDACTED] I THINK ITS TIME FOR THE WHITES TO START A [REDACTED] RIOT!!!!!!!!! G9 TO THE BLACKS COMMUNITY AND DESTROY THEIR [REDACTED] !!!!!!!!!!!!!!! [REDACTED] SUCKERS AND PEOPLE WANT TO KNOW WHY SO MANY WHITES HATE THEM PAAAAAAAAAAAA.... [REDACTED] COCK ROCH, BALL SNIFFING [REDACTED]



>em>Massachusetts Department of Justice photo.

"The toxic brew of racist hate, threats of violence and use of social media to amplify vile and violent attitudes is a corrosive danger to every law-abiding member of our community. The nearly eight-year sentence imposed on this defendant should send a message that when you engage in hate crimes, there is a serious price to be paid. This defendant's horrifying and vicious threats were not only imperiled the safety and well-being of the victims here, but they were also a broadside attack on the values of equality and respect that our nation upholds. This office is deeply grateful for the victims' courage to report this incident to law enforcement and assist us in prosecuting this important case," said Acting United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy. "Hate crimes and acts of intimidation have no place in our society. Our office will continue to work tirelessly to combat hate crimes and to foster an environment where every member of our community can live without fear of violence or discrimination."

"Stephen DeBerardinis is a career criminal with multiple felony convictions who continued to demonstrate a blatant disregard for the law by sending a series of horribly racist, hate-motivated threats of brutal violence to an interracial couple he had never met," said Jodi Cohen, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston

Division. "It's time to stop this defendant from committing further harm, and today's sentence does exactly that. It also serves as a warning to other repeat offenders that the FBI and our partners will continue to root out and bring to justice anyone who is intent on threatening violence based on racism or bigotry."



>em>Massachusetts Department of Justice photo.

In late December 2020, the victims, a white woman and a Black man, announced their engagement on Facebook and included photographs of themselves. DeBerardinis, who did not know the couple personally, could view the announcement and photographs because he was a friend of one or more of the victims' Facebook friends.

On Jan. 6, 2021, DeBerardinis, using his own Facebook account, used Facebook Messenger to send the couple a series of threatening and harassing messages. For example, DeBerardinis wrote, "EWWWWWWW YOUR A N***** F***** F***** DIRTY A** WHITE TRASH," and continued with similar messages. When the couple messaged DeBerardinis that they were reporting him to law enforcement, he sent them a message that said, "SNITCHES GET STITCHES" with a picture of brass knuckles. DeBerardinis also threatened, "Read up more on me lol... you will see how me and my crew burn n*****s alive," and "And white whores like you well [sic]... get rape and killed THAN [sic] we cut off body parts and mail them to your family lol." The victims reported

the incident to local police, who contacted federal law enforcement.

According to court filings, a subsequent investigation revealed DeBerardinis' extensive criminal record of more than 100 arrests over the past 24 years, including prior state convictions for threats, intimidation, false reports of a crime, impersonation of a police officer, and larceny, among other crimes. The investigation also revealed that in September 2021, months after his Facebook threats to the interracial couple, DeBerardinis threatened a journalist who wrote an unflattering article about his involvement in a protest where he was seen trying to punch protestors at a rally. In addition, DeBerardinis' Facebook account contained multiple posts of race motivated, hate filled speech and white supremacist symbolism:



>em>Massachusetts Department of Justice photo.
Defendant's Facebook account contained multiple posts of race motivated, hate filled speech and white supremacist symbolism
During a search of his residence, over 70 knives, 22 brass knuckles, swords, bullets, black powder for guns, stun guns,

rifles and a number of other weapons were recovered. According to court filings, the investigation located photos of weapons posted on DeBerardinis' Facebook.

Acting U.S. Attorney Levy; FBI SAC Cohen; and Boston Police Commissioner Michael Cox made the announcement today. The Suffolk County District Attorney's Office provided valuable assistance. Assistant U.S. Attorney Torey B. Cummings of the Civil Rights & Human Trafficking Unit and Nadine Pellegrini, Chief of the National Security Unit, prosecuted the case."- Massachusetts Department of Justice.



>em>Massachusetts Department of Justice photo.

Boston Pizzeria owner convicted of forced labor, assaulting employees, reporting workers to ICE

Defendant physically abused and threatened six employees for nearly a decade.

“BOSTON – The owner of Stash’s Pizza, a pizzeria chain in Massachusetts, was convicted today following a nine-day jury trial of forced labor charges. The defendant forced or attempted to force six victims to work for him and comply with excessive workplace demands through violent physical abuse; threats of violence and serious harm; and repeated threats to report the victims to immigration authorities for deportation.

Stavros Papantoniadis, a/k/a “Steve Papantoniadis,” 48, of Westwood, Mass., was convicted of three counts of forced labor and three counts of attempted forced labor. Chief U.S. District Judge F. Dennis Saylor IV scheduled sentencing for Sept. 12, 2024, at 11:00 a.m. Papantoniadis has remained in custody since his arrest on March 16, 2023.

“Today’s guilty verdict sends a powerful message to abusive employers that exploiting employees through fear and intimidation will never be tolerated. I hope that this verdict also alerts others who may be victims of exploitation and harm by employers, that the federal government will not sit idly by.

We will vigorously investigate and prosecute any employer who thinks they are above the law and physically and mentally

abuses employees, withholds wages due, or threatens and intimidates workers,” said Acting United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy. “Mr. Papantoniadis preyed on the desperation of those without immigration status, subjecting them to violence and threats of deportation.

Forced labor is a serious violation of human rights, and no one in the United States should live in fear of abuse and coercion in their workplace. I commend the tireless efforts of our law enforcement partners who worked collaboratively to bring this defendant to justice.”

Papantoniadis forced or attempted to force five men and one woman to work for him through violent physical abuse, threats of abuse, and repeated threats to report victims to immigration authorities to have them deported. According to evidence introduced at trial, Papantoniadis thinly staffed his pizza shops, and purposely employed workers without immigration status to work behind the scenes, for 14 or more hours per day and as many as seven days per week. To maintain control of those undocumented workers, he made them believe that he would physically harm them or have them deported. He monitored the workers with surveillance cameras, which he accessed from his cell phone, and constantly demeaned, insulted and harassed them. When Papantoniadis learned that one victim planned to quit, he violently choked him, causing that victim to flee the pizza shop and run to safety in the parking lot. When other victims separately expressed their intentions to quit, Papantoniadis told one victim that he would kill him and call immigration authorities; and he threatened another worker by telling him he knew where the victim lived. When another worker tried to leave and drive away from one of Papantoniadis’ pizza shops, Papantoniadis chased the victim down Route 1 in Norwood, Mass., and falsely reported the victim to the local police in an effort to pressure the victim to return to work at the pizza shop.

“Stavros Papantoniadis instilled fear in his employees. He

underpaid and threatened them, some with fear of arrest and many with physical abuse. Today, the jury saw the indignities his employees were subjected to and have found Papantoniadis guilty of forced labor violations,” said Michael J. Krol, Special Agent in Charge of Homeland Security Investigations in New England. “Everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and respect – especially those who place their trust in their employer. HSI is committed to ensuring those who violate forced labor laws are held accountable and brought to justice.”

“The jury’s verdict affirms the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General’s commitment to prioritize and investigate allegations of labor trafficking by individuals who enrich themselves through coercion or force. Stavros Papantoniadis used threats of arrest, deportation, reprisals, and physical violence to ensure his employees continued to work for wages lower than required by the Fair Labor Standards Act. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to aggressively investigate those who engage in labor trafficking,” said Jonathan Mellone, Special Agent-in-Charge, Northeast Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General.

Papantoniadis is the owner and operator of Stash’s Pizza, a chain of pizzerias which has locations in Dorchester and Roslindale, and previously had pizzerias in Norwood, Norwell, Randolph (d/b/a Boston Pizza Company), Weymouth (d/b/a Pacini’s Italian Eatery), and Wareham, Mass.

The charges of forced labor and attempted forced labor each provide for a sentence of up to 20 years in prison, up to five years of supervised release, a fine of up to \$250,000, and restitution. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and statutes which govern the determination of a sentence in a criminal case.

Members of the public who believe they are a victim of labor trafficking or have information about labor trafficking, please call 888-221-6023, Option 5 or send an email with contact information to USAMA.VictimAssistance@usdoj.gov.

Acting U.S. Attorney Levy, HSI SAC Krol and DOL-OIG SAC Mellone made the announcement today. Assistance was provided by the Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division, the Boston Police Department, and the Norwood Police Department. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Timothy E. Moran, Chief of the Organized Crime & Gang Unit, and Brian A. Fogerty of the Civil Rights & Human Trafficking Unit are prosecuting the case.”-Massachusetts Department of Justice.

71-year-old New Bedford man allegedly steals \$450,000 in Veterans’ Disability Benefits

Benefits were intended for a 20-year Marine veteran with ALS.

“BOSTON – A New Bedford man has been charged with stealing over \$450,000 in disability benefits issued by the United States Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) intended for a 20-year veteran of the United States Marine Corps suffering from Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS).

Joseph Smith, 71, was charged with one count of theft of government benefits and one count of conspiracy to steal government benefits. Smith is currently in custody on unrelated charges and will appear in federal court in Boston at 12:30 p.m. on June 11, 2024.

According to the charging documents, shortly after the victim's ALS diagnosis in August 2015, the VBA approved the victim's application for disability benefits and awarded him approximately \$8,318 in monthly payments. The VBA began issuing payments in September 2015 via monthly checks mailed to the victim's former residence in New Bedford, where he had resided with Smith's relative and others prior to hospitalization.

It is alleged that between approximately 2015 and 2020, while the victim was hospitalized for ALS, Smith and others received monthly VBA disability checks intended for the victim and deposited those checks into bank accounts they controlled. Smith allegedly first deposited the disability checks into a bank account in his own name and then began depositing the checks into a bank account that he and others fraudulently opened in the name of victim. Shortly after depositing the disability checks, Smith allegedly withdrew the funds in cash and used the money for personal expenses.

In total, between in or around 2015 and 2020, Smith and others allegedly stole more than \$450,000 in VBA disability benefits intended for the victim.

"80 years ago this week, incredibly brave members of our military stormed the beaches of Normandy to save Europe. Every citizen owes a debt of gratitude to the veterans who have served our country. It is beyond the pale to steal disability payments that were intended for a 20-year military veteran facing a life-threatening disease, as is alleged here. The immorality exposed by the criminal justice system is, at times, simply stunning," said Acting United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy.

"It is difficult to imagine a financial crime more despicable than one alleged to have targeted a vulnerable member of our community. But targeting a vulnerable person who proudly served our nation is exactly that 'difficult to imagine'

offense. The Postal Inspection Service, working with our law enforcement partners is committed to identifying these predators and bringing them to justice," said Ketty D. Larco-Ward, Inspector in Charge of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, Boston Division.

"Our office is committed to holding accountable those who allegedly steal VA benefits intended for veterans with disabilities," said Special Agent in Charge Christopher Algieri of the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General's Northeast Field Office. "We thank the U.S. Attorney's Office and our law enforcement partners for their excellent work in pursuing justice in this case."

"We will continue to pursue those who misuse the Social Security number and identities of others for their own personal and selfish gain," said Gail S. Ennis, Inspector General for the Social Security Administration. "I thank our law enforcement partners for working with us in this investigation and the U.S. Attorney's Office for their efforts in prosecuting this case and holding this individual accountable for their alleged conduct."

The charge of theft of government benefits provides for a sentence of up to 10 years in prison, three years of supervised release and a fine of \$250,000 or twice the gross gain or loss, whichever is greater. The charge of conspiracy to steal government benefits provides for a sentence of up to five years in prison, three years of supervised release and a fine of \$250,000. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and statutes which govern the determination of a sentence in a criminal case.

Acting U.S. Attorney Levy, USPIS INC Larco-Ward, VA-OIG SAC Algieri and SSA IG Ennis made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorney Benjamin A. Saltzman of the Securities Financial & Cyber Fraud Unit is prosecuting the case.

The details contained in the charging document are allegations. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

New Bedford Police PSA: “Porch pirates across America now wearing Amazon uniforms!”

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Recent reports from police departments across the U.S. have highlighted a concerning new trend in package theft, where porch pirates have been seen impersonating Amazon delivery drivers by wearing a vest with the Amazon logo while carrying an empty box and switching it out with the real package. Please see the article below for more information, as well as some helpful tips from the NBPD:

4. **Track the Package:** Utilize the tracking feature provided by Amazon to keep an eye on your package's delivery status. This way, you can be aware of when it's expected to arrive and make arrangements to be present if possible.

5. **Amazon Locker Delivery:** If available in your area, consider using Amazon Locker for delivery. This service allows you to pick up your package from a secure location at your convenience.

0. **Valuable items:** If your package contains valuable items, consider selecting the option to require a signature upon delivery. This ensures that someone is present

to receive the package and reduces the risk of theft.

□. □□□□□□□ □□□□□□□ □□□□□□□: Installing security cameras around your property can act as a deterrent to potential thieves. Additionally, if a theft does occur, the footage may help identify the perpetrator and aid in their apprehension.

□. □□□ □□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□ □□ □□□□□□□: Smart doorbells or cameras equipped with motion sensors can alert you in real-time when someone approaches your doorstep. Some models even allow for two-way communication, enabling you to interact with the delivery person remotely.

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□. □□□□ □□□□□: Be aware of people following a delivery vehicle in hopes of stealing a package after it has been delivered.

□. □□□□□□ □□: Immediately report any suspected package thefts or suspicious persons/ activities.

By implementing these precautions, you can help minimize the risk of Amazon package theft and ensure that your deliveries arrive safely! And if you, or someone you know, has been a victim of porch pirating, you can report it here: <https://www.newbedfordpd.com/report/>

Read the article here.”-City of New Bedford Police Department.