

# Nigerian National Extradited From France To Face Charges For His Alleged Role In A Scheme To Steal Government Benefits, Including More Than \$8 Million In Federal Emergency Assistance

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**For Immediate Release**

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Maryland

**Greenbelt**, Maryland – Newton Ofioritse Jemide, a Nigerian national, was extradited from France to the United States on September 13, 2024 to face federal charges for wire fraud and money laundering conspiracies in a scheme to fraudulently obtain federal benefits. Jemide had his initial appearance on September 16, 2024, and is currently detained pending trial.

The extradition was announced by Philip Selden, First Assistant United States Attorney for the District of Maryland; Special Agent in Charge Mark I. Tasky of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) – Office of Inspector General; Special Agent in Charge Colleen Lawlor of the Social Security Administration (SSA) Office of Inspector General; Special Agent in Charge Matthew R. Stohler of the U.S. Secret Service – Washington Field Office; Andrew McKay, Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA).

During the time period covered by the indictment, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was responsible for providing emergency benefits and compensation for damage to victims who were affected by declared national emergency disasters, such as hurricanes and wildfires. Among other benefits, an individual in an area affected by a national disaster was immediately eligible for “Critical Needs Assistance” (CNA) to purchase life-saving or life sustaining materials. The assistance was paid to the victim in a manner of his/her choosing, including being deposited onto pre-paid debit cards.

According to the two-count indictment, from 2016 through 2018 Jemide’s co-conspirators purchased hundreds of Green Dot debit cards, which they then registered with Green Dot, using the stolen personal information of identity theft victims from around the country. In 2017, amidst Hurricanes

Harvey, Irma and Maria, and the California wildfires, co-conspirators allegedly applied online with FEMA for CNA using the stolen personal information of additional identity theft victims. According to the indictment, FEMA paid at least \$8 million in amounts of \$500 per claim to the Green Dot debit cards purchased by the co-conspirators.

In addition to filing false disaster-assistance claims with FEMA, the indictment alleges that co-conspirators also filed false claims online for Social Security benefits, for IRS tax refunds and for other government benefits, using the stolen identities of multiple additional individuals, including names, addresses, Social Security Numbers (“SSN”) and other personal identifiers.

The indictment alleges that FEMA, and the other federal agencies to whom fraudulent applications for benefits were submitted, deposited the falsely claimed benefits directly onto the Green Dot debit cards. After the funds were placed onto the Green Dot debit cards, Jemide and his co-conspirators then informed other conspirators that funds were available on the cards, and provided information to facilitate “cashing out” the funds from the cards, which co-conspirators did in exchange for a commission. The co-conspirators cashed out the cards by depositing the money into bank accounts, and/or through ATM withdrawals or purchases of money orders.

According to the indictment, the co-conspirators took steps to conceal their identities and the conspiracy and scheme to defraud, including by enlisting other individuals to make the purchases and withdrawals with the cards, utilizing multiple store and bank locations and methods of withdrawal, using multiple bank accounts (including in the names of corporate entities), converting funds into cash rather than placing them into bank accounts, and making money orders payable to other individuals and/or corporate entities which they or their co-conspirators controlled.

Jemide and his co-conspirators allegedly used an encrypted messaging application, e-mail and other means to communicate, and used the stolen federal funds to pay rental and housing expenses, to purchase used vehicles, and for other purposes.

If convicted, Jemide faces a maximum sentence of 30 years in federal prison for conspiracy to commit wire fraud and a maximum 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.

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

First Assistant U.S. Attorney Selden commended the DHS OIG, SSA OIG, USSS, TIGTA and French authorities for their work in the investigation and thanked the Justice Department’s Office of International Affairs and the United States Marshal’s Service for their valuable assistance to secure the extradition of Jemide to the United States. Mr. Selden thanked Assistant U.S. Attorneys Elizabeth Wright and Darren Gardner, 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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