

DOJ: California man sentenced to 5 years for laundering \$5.1 million

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MADISON, WIS. – Timothy M. O’Shea, United States Attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin, announced that Sinval De Oliveria, 49, Torrance, California was sentenced yesterday by U.S. District Judge William M. Conley to 5 years in federal prison for his role in a money laundering conspiracy. De Oliveria pleaded guilty to the offense on March 4, 2022. Money laundering is a crime that involves using financial transactions that are designed to conceal the true source, location, or ownership of proceeds derived from other crimes.

In November and December 2020, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, together with local law enforcement, investigated a series of thefts by fraud involving individuals who used false pretenses to convince employees of businesses to collect and deliver the businesses’ cash-on-hand to individuals who were supposedly legitimate money couriers. Businesses large and small were targeted in the scheme and the loss to date is approximately \$300,000.

On December 2, 2020, De Oliveria flew to Milwaukee where he picked up \$242,980 in fraud proceeds from co-defendants Moises Amezcua-Cardenas and Mario Amezcua-Cardenas. After he picked up the money, De Oliveria used a series of smaller ATM transactions at various Milwaukee area banks to deposit the cash into a funnel bank account. He used ATM transactions to avoid having to go into a bank and show identification. The bank account where De Oliveria deposited the money was held in the name of a Florida business but had no legitimate business purpose other than to collect cash from illicit activities. Once deposited, the fraud proceeds from Wisconsin were transferred to another funnel bank account and then eventually sent overseas. De Oliveria received a commission for the money he laundered.

Judge Conley found that the Wisconsin financial transactions were part of a much larger pattern of nation-wide money laundering activity undertaken by De Oliveria, concluding that the defendant laundered more than \$5.1 million in illicit proceeds from various unlawful activities in just the five months surrounding the Wisconsin transactions. Judge Conley also found that De Oliveira knew he was conducting financial transactions using proceeds from criminal activities. Judge Conley took into consideration many factors in arriving at an appropriate sentence, including the fact that De Oliveria was already on probation for another criminal offense in California at the time of this offense, that his conduct was more serious than his co-defendants, and that he would likely be deported back to his home country of Brazil following his imprisonment.

Co-defendant Mario Amezcua-Cardenas was sentenced to 30 months in federal prison on May 18, 2022, and co-defendant Moises Amezcua-Cardenas is scheduled for sentencing on June 17, 2022. Mario Amezcua-Cardenas and Moises Amezcua-Cardenas are brothers.

The charges against the defendants were the result of investigations conducted by U.S. Department of Homeland Security-Homeland Security Investigations, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Merrill Police Department, Wausau Police Department, Everest Police Department, West Allis Police Department, Stevens Point Police Department, and Marathon County Sheriff's Department, with special assistance from the Marathon County District Attorney's Office. Assistant U.S. Attorney Meredith P. Duchemin prosecuted this case.