



U.S. Department of Justice

United States Attorney
Southern District of Florida

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NEWS RELEASE:

Inmate Sentenced to Twenty Years' Imprisonment in Connection with Racketeering Offenses Committed from Miami Federal Prison

James Sabatino, 41, was sentenced yesterday by United States District Judge Joan A. Lenard to 20 years' imprisonment for organizing and leading a prison-based criminal enterprise that engaged in mail fraud, wire fraud, interstate transportation of stolen property, and the sale and receipt of stolen goods.

Benjamin G. Greenberg, Acting United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, Robert F. Lasky, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Miami Field Office, Robert A. Bourbon, Special Agent in Charge, United States Department of Justice, Office of the Inspector General (DOJ-OIG), Miami Field Office, Scott Israel, Sheriff, Broward Sheriff's Office (BSO), and Miguel De La Rosa, Chief, Bal Harbour Police Department, made the announcement.

Sabatino previously pled guilty to conspiracy to violate the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations ("RICO") Act, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1962(d).

Between 2015 and 2017, Sabatino was incarcerated at the Federal Detention Center in Miami, Florida. While detained there, Sabatino obtained several cellular telephones, which he used to impersonate entertainment-industry employees and executives. Using the contraband cellular telephones, Sabatino contacted retail and jewelry store employees and brand representatives through telephone calls, e-mails, and text messages to request that the victims send handbags, wristwatches, apparel, jewelry, and other valuable items to various locations in South Florida and elsewhere. Sabatino claimed that the retail items would be featured in music videos and promotional materials that were being filmed and produced in Miami, Florida.

Sabatino also recruited multiple co-conspirators who operated at his direction in South Florida, New York, and Georgia. According to court records, Sabatino directed the victim companies to ship retail items and jewelry to these co-conspirators. The fraudulently obtained goods were valued at over \$10 million. To date, investigators have recovered approximately \$2,527,569 in stolen property and fraud proceeds, which were forfeited to the United States at the time of sentencing. In addition, as part of his sentence, Sabatino was ordered to pay over \$10 million in restitution.

Sabatino's co-defendants, Jorge Duquen, Valerie Kay Hunt, and Denise Siksha Lewis, previously pled guilty in Southern District of Florida case number 16-20519-CR-Lenard and were sentenced to various prison terms.

Mr. Greenberg commended the investigative efforts of the FBI, DOJ-OIG, BSO, and the Bal Harbour Police Department. This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Christopher B. Browne.

A copy of this press release may be found on the website of the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida at www.usdoj.gov/usao/fls. Related court documents and information may be found on the website of the District Court for the Southern District of Florida at www.flsd.uscourts.gov or on <http://pacer.flsd.uscourts.gov>.