



ERIK NASARENKO

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NEWS RELEASE



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Georgia Woman Sentenced in Real Estate Wire Fraud Scheme

VENTURA, Calif. – District Attorney Erik Nasarenko announced today that Jasmine Shante Faniel, (DOB 05/09/85), also known as Teresa Dennis, of Conyers Georgia, was sentenced on October 30, 2024, to nine months in jail, two years formal probation, and ordered to pay victim restitution for her role in a real estate wire fraud scheme.

In this scheme, fraudsters gain access to real estate transactions by impersonating trusted parties like escrow officers, agents, title representatives, and other key figures. This fraud typically occurs through sophisticated computer scammers operating outside the U.S. who compromise emails between the parties. Once fraudsters gain access to the transaction, they target buyer's closing funds, seller's proceeds, lender's funds, and even commissions. By intercepting or manipulating email communications, legitimate parties in the transaction are deceived into wiring money to fraudulent accounts opened by low-level participants in the fraud known as "money mules", who receive the stolen funds and launder them to other participants in the fraud, typically located outside the U.S.

In March 2023, while using the false name Teresa Dennis, Faniel opened multiple bank accounts in Georgia to accept and launder funds stolen from a local family attempting to purchase their first home. After receiving the victims' money from co-defendant Abdoul Aziz Bah and retaining a small portion for herself, Faniel transferred the bulk of the stolen funds to Nigeria, where the money was laundered through international auto auctions. The investigation in this case determined both defendants acted as "money mules". They received the stolen \$201,000 from the victims and then laundered it.

On September 26, 2024, defendant Bah was sentenced to one year in jail, two years formal probation and to pay full restitution to the victims. Prior to his sentencing, Bah paid \$5,000 in cash as partial victim restitution.

During the investigation in this case, \$33,500 of the victims' stolen money was traced to an account in Georgia in Faniel's false name, Teresa Dennis. After her guilty plea on September 26, 2024, the District Attorney's Office Real Estate Fraud Unit (DAO REFU) obtained a court order requiring these funds be returned to the victims as partial restitution. To date, \$38,500 has been recovered and returned to the victims.

Senior Deputy District Attorney Dominic Kardum, a member of the Ventura County District Attorney's Office Real Estate Fraud Unit, prosecuted the case.

"This case serves as a warning to always verify wire transfer requests by placing a phone call and speaking to a known member of the transaction to confirm the request is valid before ever wiring funds," Mr. Kardum said.

Bah and Faniel's convictions are the result of an extensive investigation by the DAO REFU with assistance from the Ventura County Sheriff's Office Fugitive Unit who completed the extradition of the defendants to Ventura County from Georgia.

Case: 2023007215

Defendant Information:

Jasmine Shante Faniel, AKA Teresa Dennis (DOB 05/09/85)
Conyers, Georgia

Charges Pled Guilty to:

- PC 496(a) – Receiving stolen property over \$950
- PC 186.10(a) – Money Laundering

