

THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

District of Maryland

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, April 22, 2022

California Man Sentenced to Federal Prison for a \$1.5 Million Money Laundering Conspiracy

Greenbelt, Maryland – U.S. District Judge George J. Hazel sentenced Brandon Ross, a/k/a “Shaba X”, age 33, of Los Angeles, California to 18 months in federal prison, followed by three years of supervised release, for a large-scale money laundering conspiracy. As part of his guilty plea, Ross will be required to pay at least \$1,500,000 in restitution.

The sentence was announced by United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Erek L. Barron; Special Agent in Charge Christopher Dillard of the Department of Defense, Office of Inspector General, Defense Criminal Investigative Service - Mid-Atlantic Field Office; and Special Agent in Charge James R. Mancuso of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Baltimore.

According to his plea agreement, from October 2015 to January 2017, Ross, Peter Unakalu, Khalid Razaq, Saul Eady, Troy Barbour, and others participated in a scheme to launder proceeds of criminal activity by fraudulently obtaining technology-related merchandise without payment and selling the merchandise in furtherance of the money laundering scheme.

As part of the scheme to defraud, Ross convinced three technology-related companies (victim companies) that his co-conspirators were authorized to make purchase agreements and then caused the victim companies to ship specialized communications equipment, cell phones, computers, and large screen televisions to co-conspirators without payment. Ross and his co-conspirators subsequently sold or disposed of the fraudulently obtained property after receiving them. These transactions were designed to conceal the true nature, location, source, and ownership of the unlawful proceeds.

It was further part of the conspiracy that Ross received the fraudulently obtained proceeds and engaged in a series of bank and wire transfers to his co-conspirators in the effort to conceal the criminal nature of the scheme. For example, on November 28, 2016, Ross deposited \$7,500 in cash into Razaq's bank account.

Then on December 2, 2016, Ross wired \$2,955 to Unakalu, who was located in Nigeria, and falsely reported that it was for family support. Additionally, in January and February 2017, Barbour paid a Maryland-based moving company to transport flat-screen televisions from Virginia to California. On March 1, 2017, Ross provided Razaq \$108,570 in cash as Razaq's share of the proceeds from the scheme.

Based on bank records, the value of the goods, surveillance footage, and financial and business records from the victim companies, the loss to the three victim companies was more than \$1,500,000.

United States Attorney Erek L. Barron praised the DOD-OIG and HSI for their work on the investigation. Mr. Barron thanked the FBI, the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Industry and Security, Office of Export Enforcement, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, and Customs and Border Protection for their work in the investigation. Mr. Barron thanked Assistant U.S. Attorneys Joseph R. Baldwin and Adam K. Ake, who prosecuted the 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 and <https://www.justice.gov/usao-md/community-outreach>.

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Topic(s):

Financial Fraud

Component(s):

USAO - Maryland

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