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**PRESS RELEASE**

# Georgia Man Pleads Guilty to Defrauding California Car Dealership

Thursday, June 8, 2023

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**For Immediate Release**

U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of California

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Michael Uziewe, 63, of Grayson, Georgia, pleaded guilty today to one count of bank fraud related to an online scheme that defrauded a business owner in California and a second business owner in New Jersey, U.S. Attorney Phillip A. Talbert announced.

According to court documents, Uziewe owned a purported business named God's Word Christian Book Store. In March 2020, the first victim, an owner of a classic car dealership in Irvine, began communicating with a purported seller of two transmissions. At the seller's direction, the victim sent more than \$13,000 to the God's Word business account that Uziewe controlled at Ameris Bank. The victim never received the transmissions.

Also, in April 2020, the second victim, an owner of a nail salon in Jersey City, New Jersey, sent more than \$100,000 to Uziewe's Ameris Bank account. She sent the funds to assist the return to the United States of an individual who claimed he was a surgeon working for the United Nations in Yemen and needed money to pay for costs associated with traveling to the United States.

When Uziewe attempted to withdraw the funds from the God's Word account, he falsely claimed that they were proceeds of book sales.

This case is the product of an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the U.S. Department of Defense Office of Inspector General. Assistant U.S. Attorney Matthew Thuesen is prosecuting the case.

U.S. District Judge Daniel J. Calabretta is scheduled to sentence Uziewe on Sept. 14, 2023. He faces up to 30 years in prison and a \$1 million fine. The actual sentence, however, will be determined at the court's discretion after consideration of any applicable statutory factors and the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of variables.

*Updated June 8, 2023*

## Topic

**FINANCIAL FRAUD**

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