

Florida Man Pretends to be General Counsel and Law Firm Partner in a Fake Epstein Investigation



Jonathan Ghortler, a Florida man, is facing charges of wire fraud, making false statements, and aggravated identity theft for posing as a general counsel and a senior-level executive of two financial firms in Manhattan, New York City. Ghortler allegedly directed personnel to pay for fake internal investigations to determine ties between people in those firms and deceased multimillionaire financier Jeffrey Epstein.

Federal prosecutors allege that Ghortler defrauded companies of over \$1 million and convinced federal investigators to stop their investigation into his scheme by impersonating some of the most prominent figures in finance and law. Damian Williams, the U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York, stated that Ghortler had been prosecuted for similar impersonation schemes.

According to Bloomberg, Ghortler was charged by federal prosecutors in New York in 2001 for posing as a partner in six of the largest U.S. law firms. He conned them into paying about \$200,000 and was sentenced to 71 months in prison. Ghortler's attorney, Michael Nielsen, did not respond to Bloomberg's request for comment.

The latest criminal complaint, filed on February 14, alleges that Ghortler began impersonating the general counsel of a global private equity firm in December 2021 and fraudulently caused its portfolio companies to pay at least \$200,000 to fund a nonexistent internal investigation involving Epstein. Beginning in May 2021, Ghortler began impersonating the founder of a different investment firm and directed the CEO of one of the firm's portfolio companies to pay at least \$865,000 for a similar fake internal investigation into relationships with Epstein.

When Ghortler learned that federal investigators were looking into a potentially fraudulent payment made by the investment firm, he posed as a partner at an international law firm that represented the founder. He told the FBI over the phone that the firm had chosen not to report the fraud because it "was 'made whole' by the fraudster." Ghortler allegedly spoke again with federal agents a few days later, saying "after 'consult[ing]' with 'associates and lower-level partners' at the global law firm who 'used to work' at the United States attorney's office for the Southern District of New York, 'our position is that, uh, the law states that, umm, you know, if the money was paid back before, uh, the crime being, uh, discovered, uh, it's not a crime.'"

Williams stated that Ghortler's arrest demonstrates his office's commitment to stopping recidivist fraudsters like Ghortler and seeking justice for victims of financial fraud. Ghortler's previous conviction for similar impersonation schemes underscores the importance of vigilance in preventing and detecting fraud, especially when it involves high-profile individuals and organizations.

In conclusion, Ghortler's alleged impersonation of general counsels and senior-level executives in financial firms to defraud companies and evade investigation highlights the need for increased scrutiny and due diligence in internal investigations. This case demonstrates that fraudsters may use sophisticated tactics to deceive individuals and organizations. It is essential to remain vigilant and take appropriate measures to prevent and detect fraud.

REFERENCES:

Florida man impersonates general counsel, law firm partner in fake Epstein probe