PRESS RELEASE

Coordinated Takedown of Scam Centers Leads to at Least 276 Arrests; Alleged Managers and Recruiters Charged in San Diego

Wednesday, April 29, 2026

For Immediate Release

Office of Public Affairs

Unprecedented cooperation between the FBI, Dubai Police Department, and Chinese Ministry of Public Security has resulted in the arrest of at least 276 individuals and the dismantlement of at least nine scam centers used for cryptocurrency investment fraud schemes. These centers targeted Americans who have suffered millions of dollars in losses from such schemes.

This international crackdown last week was spearheaded by the Dubai Police, under the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ministry of Interior. Among the 275 arrested by Dubai authorities were three defendants charged in the Southern District of California with federal wire fraud and money laundering charges. An additional person was arrested by the Royal Thai Police.

Thet Min Nyi (27, a Burmese national), Wiliang Awang (23, an Indonesian national), Andreas Chandra (29, an Indonesia national), Lisa Mariam (29, an Indonesian national), and two fugitive co-conspirators have been charged with federal fraud and money laundering charges unsealed in San Diego today. Dubai Police apprehended Thet Min Nyi, Chandra, and Mariam, while the Royal Thai Police apprehended Awang.

“Fraudsters who target Americans from overseas cannot operate with impunity, no matter where in the world they reside,” said Assistant Attorney General A. Tysen Duva of the Justice Department’s Criminal Division. “The charges and arrests announced today reflect an international consensus that scam centers are unwelcome everywhere and must be rooted out. Scam center organizers and fraudsters who defraud Americans and others will face justice in American courts and in courts around the world. In contemporary society, fraud is borderless, and law enforcement activity to combat it and eliminate it is as well."

"These scammers thought they were safe half a world away," said U.S. Attorney Adam Gordon for the Southern District of California. "But their world has changed. Global crime now faces global justice."

"This operation demonstrates the FBI's steadfast commitment to preventing scammers from further defrauding the American people," said Assistant Director Heith Janke of the FBI's Criminal Division. "We can't do this work alone, and we are proud to coordinate and collaborate with our partners to hold accountable those who work to enable and facilitate these scams."

"Today's indictment demonstrates the FBI's determination to identify, disrupt, and dismantle these global scam centers defrauding Americans no matter where they set up shop," said Special Agent in Charge Mark Remily of the FBI San Diego Field Office. "FBI San Diego will continue to coordinate with our law enforcement, private sector, and international partners to protect victims from cryptocurrency fraud, stop losses before they happen, and recover victim funds where we can."

In 2025, FBI San Diego agents opened a Homeland Security Task Force investigation after identifying multiple companies and individuals managing scam compounds conducting cryptocurrency investment fraud schemes. According to the indictment, two criminal complaints, and other court records, the defendants charged in San Diego managed, worked for, and recruited others to work at three different "companies" that operated several alleged scam centers: "Ko Thet Company," "Sanduo Group," and "Giant Company." All six defendants allegedly engaged in cryptocurrency investment fraud schemes through "pig-butchering," which is a type of fraud where scammers gain a victim's trust over time — through friendship or romance — before persuading them to send money to fake investments which the scammers then take. Scammers entice victims with phony friendship or romance before financially exploiting them.

The defendants targeted citizens of the United States and other countries by cultivating trust and affection with the victims, based on the charging documents and court filings. After that, the scammers promoted investments in cryptocurrencies and assisted victims in setting up accounts and transferring cryptocurrency to investment platforms that, unbeknownst to the victims, were false. The alleged scammers touted their own successes and returns in cryptocurrency investments and encouraged their victims to invest more. They also encouraged their victims to borrow money from friends and family and take out loans, to be able to "invest" more. Unbeknownst to the victims, once they made transfers to the platforms the alleged scammers suggested, they lost control of their cryptocurrency. Fake platforms put the victims' funds in the hands of the scammers, who then laundered the victims' funds to other cryptocurrency accounts, including their own.

FBI agents have identified numerous victims around the United States through complaints filed with the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3). Agents interviewed victims and analyzed financial and cryptocurrency records. So far, investigators have identified millions of dollars in losses caused by these cryptocurrency investment schemes operating across jurisdictions.

Thet Min Nyi, an alleged manager and recruiter for the Ko Thet Company, also called "Pixy," managed scam compounds. In March 2026, a grand jury in the Southern District of California returned an indictment against Thet Min Nyi and a fugitive co-defendant charging them with wire fraud conspiracy and money laundering conspiracy, along with criminal forfeiture allegations.

Further, in April 2026, two criminal complaints in the Southern District of California charged Awang, Chandra, their fugitive co-defendant, and Mariam with wire fraud conspiracy. These charges were based on cryptocurrency investment fraud schemes from two other alleged scam organizations, Sanduo Group and Giant Company.

The Dubai Police Department, under the UAE Ministry of Interior, significantly disrupted the scam operations through their parallel investigation. The Dubai Police continue to collaborate closely with international law enforcement agencies to identify and dismantle transnational criminal networks, as part of Dubai's commitment to combating financial crime and protecting victims worldwide.

Thailand's Royal Thai Police's (RTP) Immigration Bureau, Foreign Affairs, and Anti Cyber Scam Center provided significant assistance. Through RTP's efforts, a key subject and defendant in this investigation, Awang, was apprehended in Thailand.

Meta Platforms, Inc., the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, provided critical information for this investigation. U.S. authorities appreciate Meta's assistance in this matter.

These cases are being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Peter Horn for the Southern District of California and Trial Attorneys Stefanie Schwartz and William Gullotta of the Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section of the U.S. Department of Justice's Criminal Division. The U.S. Department of Justice's Office of International Affairs provided significant assistance.

FBI San Diego has investigated a number of other sophisticated cryptocurrency investment frauds. For example, Operation Level Up —which began in 2024 as a San Diego and Phoenix joint initiative — has proactively identified and notified victims of cryptocurrency investment fraud schemes. As of April 2026, the FBI notified almost 9,000 victims and saved victims an estimated $562 million. FBI-San Diego is also investigating the Tai Chang Scam Enterprise, a series of scam compounds located in Burma's Karen State also conducting cryptocurrency investment fraud schemes against Americans.

If you have been defrauded out of your money by this type of scheme, please contact the FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center at ic3.gov.

DEFENDANTS

Case Number 26CR762-RSH

Thet Min Nyi

also known as Ko Thet, also known as Ko Age: 27 Burma

*Fugitive Age: 27 Indonesia

Case Number 26MJ2335-AHG

Wiliang Awang Age: 23 Indonesia

also known as Wiliang Ng, also known as Wiliang Huang, also known as Huang Wiliang,

also known as Lincon, also known as Lincoln

Andreas Chandra Age: 29 Indonesia

also known as Andreas Chandra Kho, also known as Jay

*Fugitive Age: 22 Indonesia

Case Number 26MJ2437-AHG

Lisa Mariam Age: 29 Indonesia

also known as Melissa Chloe, also known as Cipul, also known as Naomi May Lingston,

also known as Vanessa, also known as Bella Theresia

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Wire fraud conspiracy (Title 18, United States Code, Sections 1349 and 1343)

Maximum penalty: 20 years in prison; fine of $250,000 or twice the amount of the gain or loss

Money laundering conspiracy (Title 18, United States Code, Sections 1956(h), 1956(a)(2)(A), 1956(a)(2)(B)(i))

Maximum penalty: 20 years in prison; fine of $500,000 or twice the amount of the gain or loss

U.S. AGENCIES

FBI

U.S. Secret Service

IRS Criminal Investigation

**The charges and allegations contained in an indictment or complaint are merely accusations, and the defendants are considered innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.*

This investigation is part of the Homeland Security Task Force (HSTF) initiative established by Executive Order 14159, Protecting the American People Against Invasion. The HSTF is a whole-of-government partnership dedicated to eliminating criminal cartels, foreign gangs, transnational criminal organizations, and human smuggling and trafficking rings operating in the United States and abroad. Through historic interagency collaboration, the HSTF directs the full might of United States law enforcement towards identifying, investigating, and prosecuting the full spectrum of crimes committed by these organizations, which have long fueled violence and instability within our borders. In performing this work, the HSTF places special emphasis on investigating and prosecuting those engaged in child trafficking or other crimes involving children. The HSTF further utilizes all available tools to prosecute and remove the most violent criminal aliens from the United States. HSTF San Diego comprises agents and officers from FBI, Homeland Security Investigations, DEA, ATF, U.S. Marshals Service, U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, Naval Criminal Investigative Service, IRS Criminal Investigation, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and Interpol, with the prosecution being led by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of California.

On March 6, President Trump signed an Executive Order directing the Administration to prioritize cybercrime, fraud, and predatory schemes draining American families of their life savings. Through the Executive Order, President Trump is directing every available tool be used to stop foreign-backed criminal networks that exploit vulnerable Americans through cyber-enabled fraud.

Updated April 29, 2026

Components

Criminal Division | Criminal - Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section | Criminal - Office of International Affairs | Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) | USAO - California, Southern

Press Release Number: 26-411