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lenders in New Jersey and Idaho by falsifying her company's revenue, payroll, employees ...

Feb. 03, 2023

**PAYCHECK
PROTECTION
PROGRAM**



By Jay Weaver, Miami Herald (TNS).

She did not go for a Lamborghini, as so many often do. Daniela Rendon instead got a Bentley. But the feds still noticed her flashy ride.

Now the Miami woman is in custody — accused of stealing \$381,000 from the federal government's COVID-19 loan programs intended for businesses struggling during the pandemic.

Rendon, 31, did not use the proceeds for her company's employee payroll expenses or other overhead costs, as required by law under the Small Business Administration

Paycheck Protection Program, according to an indictment. She used the fraudulently

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According to the indictment, Rendon submitted fabricated loan applications to lenders in New Jersey and Idaho by falsifying her company's revenue, payroll, number of employees, cost of goods sold and IRS tax information in order to qualify for the COVID-19 relief benefits.

But after receiving the loans through her corporate bank account, the indictment says, Rendon arranged for a payroll processor in New Jersey to issue payroll checks to herself, family members and friends for their own personal gain. The loan wire transfers went directly to her company, Rendon PA, through its account at Bank of America in Miami, according to Homeland Security Investigations agents.

The indictment, filed by federal prosecutor Jonathan Bailyn, noted that Rendon applied for her business loans through the SBA's Paycheck Protection Program for \$3710,000 and the Economic Injury Disaster Relief program for \$10,000.

Under the CARES Act approved by Congress in 2020, the federal government started doling out about \$813 billion in loans through private lenders and the SBA to support ailing businesses during the pandemic. The relief loan programs became targets for fraudulent activity because they were guaranteed by the SBA as long as the funds were properly used for overhead.

Rendon is among thousands of people in South Florida and other parts of the country who have been accused of exploiting the SBA's relief programs for businesses that faced hardship during the COVID-19 pandemic between 2020 and 2022. South Florida, with the dubious distinction of being a financial fraud capital, became an epicenter for hundreds of people accused of exploiting the SBA's loan programs, federal authorities say.

Among the worst offenders in South Florida:

Back in 2020, David T. Hines received \$3.4 million in COVID-19 relief loans from the

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In November, [Andre Lorquet, who pretended to be a certified tax preparer](#), was charged with falsely claiming that a handful of businesses were struggling during the pandemic. The Miami man ended up receiving \$4.4 million from the SBA's loan program and then went on a luxury-car shopping spree, South Florida-style, scooping up a Tesla Plaid, a Tesla Model S, a Lamborghini Urus and a Porsche Panamera GTS.

In December, a Miami man charged with swindling more than \$2 million from the SBA's loan program was found guilty of nine counts of wire fraud, money laundering and aggravated identity theft. Valesky Barosy, who faces 20 years or more in prison at his sentencing this month, showed off his high-end purchases on social media, including [photos of himself in a Lamborghini Huracán EVO](#) and private jet. He also used the fraudulently obtained funds to buy Rolex and Hublot watches, as well as designer clothing from Louis Vuitton, Gucci and Chanel.

[Former TD Bank executive Daniel Hernandez](#), who oversaw 80 employees at 27 branches in Miami-Dade County, fleeced the SBA's pandemic relief program by exploiting his bank from the inside, federal authorities say. In total, Hernandez and his illicit network received more than \$17 million in fraudulent loans approved by TD Bank and one of his previous employers, Bank of America, as well as by the SBA itself, according to court records.

Hernandez, who was fired from his TD Bank job before his arrest in August, pleaded guilty to a wire fraud conspiracy charge in December and now faces up to 10 years in prison at his sentencing in March.

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