

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS
EASTERN DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA) Case No. 23 CR 97
)
)
)
) Chicago, Illinois
CHRISTOPHER SCOTT,) August 20, 2025
) 10:16 a.m.
)
) Defendant.

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS - SENTENCING
BEFORE THE HONORABLE ELAINE E. BUCKLO

APPEARANCES:

For the Government: HONORABLE ANDREW S. BOUTROS
UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
BY: MR. ALEJANDRO G. ORTEGA
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For the Defendant: LAW OFFICE OF JOSHUA B. ADAMS, PC
BY: 900 W. Jackson Boulevard, Suite 7E
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Also Present: OFFICER JASON CHRISTIANSEN, U.S.
Probation

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PROCEEDINGS REPORTED BY STENOTYPE
TRANSCRIPT PRODUCED USING COMPUTER-AIDED TRANSCRIPTION

1 (Proceedings heard in open court:)

2 THE CLERK: Calling 23 CR 97-2, USA versus Christopher
3 Scott.

4 MR. ORTEGA: Good morning, your Honor. On behalf of
5 the United States, Alejandro Ortega, Judge.

6 THE COURT: Good morning.

7 MR. ADAMS: Good morning, your Honor. Joshua Adams
8 for Christopher Scott, who is present and to my right.

9 THE DEFENDANT: Good morning, your Honor. Christopher
10 Scott.

11 THE COURT: Good morning.

12 OFFICER CHRISTIANSEN: United States Probation Officer
13 Jason Christiansen. Good morning, Judge.

14 THE COURT: Good morning.

15 All right. I guess the first thing we have to deal
16 with is Mr. Scott's motion to continue this hearing.

17 MR. ADAMS: Your Honor, I spoke with Mr. Scott on
18 Monday, we discussed the issues, and we're ready to proceed
19 with sentencing, and he's -- and we'll withdraw that motion.

20 THE COURT: Thank you.

21 Okay. There were -- also filed by him, I think, were
22 a couple of objections.

23 MR. ADAMS: Yes, your Honor. Judge, we're going to --
24 I'm going to rely on the memo that counsel filed. I would
25 withdraw his pro se filings. I've raised the objections that I

1 thought were legally relevant in this case.

2 THE COURT: Maybe I'm looking at the -- thinking of
3 the wrong one. Give me just a minute.

4 Okay. The issue -- agree, I have to deny your
5 objection to the loss amount calculation. It's contrary to
6 Seventh Circuit --

7 MR. ADAMS: Yes, your Honor.

8 THE COURT: -- precedent. I do agree, though, about
9 the enhancement for acting on behalf of an educational
10 organization. Not because I do or don't think it has -- that
11 it might have -- be correct on the merits, but this is one --
12 that's what a plea agreement is. I mean, when -- when you say
13 that there are unknown -- you know, I understand that they can
14 be changed for unknown things, but this wasn't an unknown. And
15 so it seems to me that was the agreement. So I'm not going to
16 give that two-level enhancement.

17 How does that change things, so I get it down here.
18 So does that make it instead of -- it doesn't change, I assume,
19 the history -- well, it wouldn't change his history category.
20 Does it make it a 20?

21 MR. ADAMS: Yes, your Honor.

22 THE COURT: And what does that mean the guidelines
23 are? Probably something to 84.

24 MR. ADAMS: 70 to 87 months, your Honor.

25 MR. ORTEGA: Yeah.

1 THE COURT: Okay. All right. I think that takes care
2 of all objections. Am I correct?

3 MR. ADAMS: Yes, your Honor.

4 MR. ORTEGA: Yes, your Honor.

5 THE COURT: All right. Then I'll listen to the
6 government. I've read everything that's been submitted.

7 MR. ORTEGA: Thank you, your Honor. Your Honor, the
8 government takes these -- these COVID fraud cases very
9 seriously for reasons I outlined in my position paper. This
10 was a time when a global pandemic caused manifold economic harm
11 to millions of people across the world, including Americans who
12 were entitled to this emergency relief that was administered by
13 the SBA.

14 THE COURT: I have to make one correction.

15 MR. ORTEGA: I'm sorry.

16 THE COURT: You said that this fraud started in March
17 2020, or maybe before. They didn't pass the PPP Act until
18 sometime near the end of March of 2020.

19 MR. ORTEGA: Correct, your Honor. And as I mentioned
20 in my position paper, Mr. Scott applied for 20 EIDL loans and
21 seven PPP loans during the course of the scheme with an
22 intended loss of nearly \$2 million for entities that either did
23 not exist at all or perhaps did exist at some point in time but
24 were not in operation at the time of the material misstatements
25 on the applications.

1 In addition, your Honor, I outlined in my position
2 paper facts that I believe are aggravating. Namely, the
3 evidence in this case that -- that Mr. Scott stole checks to
4 perpetuate the fraudulent scheme from what all -- all
5 indications are innocent company. And that he attempted to
6 intimidate the secret service officer who was investigating
7 this case.

8 THE COURT: I read that part. I don't -- at least
9 from reading it, I didn't really understand that. Anyway, I'm
10 not going to take that into account.

11 MR. ORTEGA: And your Honor -- your Honor already
12 ruled on the PSR objections, so it's the government's position
13 that the loss amount is obviously the intended loss amount.

14 And so, you know, the last thing I'll just mention in
15 terms of 3553(a) factors is the defendant's history and
16 characteristics. The highest criminal history category, the
17 history of wire fraud cases, and even violent -- convictions
18 for violent crime cases.

19 So, your Honor, based on the guidelines, which are
20 driven by the loss amounts and the criminal history category,
21 based on your Honor's calculations, the guidelines are 70 to
22 87 months. My position paper asks for 96 months. It's not my
23 position to go outside the guidelines. So, your Honor, given
24 that allocution in my position paper, I would just seek a
25 guideline sentence, whatever your Honor believes is fair in

1 this case.

2 THE COURT: Thank you. Go ahead.

3 MR. ADAMS: Thank you, your Honor.

4 Judge, I think the biggest issue in this case for
5 Mr. Scott is deterrence. This is his third case in this
6 building. And I think he has shown a willingness to stop this
7 kind of activity. He met with the government I believe twice,
8 or even -- I think it was three times. He provided them with
9 information. He was honest and forthcoming with them. Didn't
10 lead to any new cases or new charges or uncover new frauds, but
11 it shows a willingness, which I think was not present in
12 previous cases, to turn a new leaf and not continue this life
13 of committing fraud.

14 And I want to address one thing the government said
15 about his violent history. Paragraph 52 of the PSR has a --
16 shows an aggravated unlawful use of a weapon. He was 21 years
17 old then. That was in the year 2000. And then in 2020 -- in
18 2002, another aggravated unlawful use of a weapon. He was
19 22 years old. That's -- you know, we're going on 23 and
20 25 years ago. I think he's left that kind of life.

21 I know he's trying to, you know, provide for his
22 family, trying to provide for his children. And he is
23 remorseful for the conduct in this case. But I think his
24 conduct -- his post-arrest conduct shows a willingness to lead
25 a law-abiding and healthy life and not continue to recidivate

1 and pose a risk to the government and pose a risk to society as
2 a whole by perpetuating these frauds.

3 So, Judge, we ask for a sentence of 24 months in
4 custody. And I think that takes into account not only
5 Mr. Scott's conduct but similarly situated defendants all over
6 the country who are getting -- who are being convicted and
7 sentenced on these PPP cases.

8 THE COURT: It's hard to know which ones are similarly
9 situated. Here, we have a Criminal History Category of VI,
10 including -- which is unusual -- two prior cases in this
11 building involving fraud.

12 Anything more you want to say?

13 MR. ADAMS: I just wanted to just repeat, Judge, that
14 in the previous two cases he didn't show a willingness to
15 assist the government uncovering new or unknown conduct, and he
16 did that here. So I think that should weigh in favor,
17 respectfully, of a sentence below the guidelines.

18 Thank you, Judge.

19 THE COURT: Would you like to speak?

20 THE DEFENDANT: Yes, ma'am, your Honor. Well, like
21 the government said, I've been here twice before. And I was
22 young, trying to find myself at that time. Did I do fraud
23 before? I did. Because I was scared to be a drug dealer. I
24 was still trying to find myself. I had a gun, yes, I did, but
25 guess what? I had a FOID card. So I was driving, and that's

1 why -- that's how I got that conviction because the lawyer was
2 just, like, hurry up --

3 THE COURT: I'm not concerned about the gun.

4 THE DEFENDANT: Right. So I did mess up. But I'm --
5 but I've been out 20 -- 20 some years doing right. I'm on the
6 Belle Collective on the Oprah Winfrey Network, and I wrote
7 several books. Every -- every award that I've gotten since
8 I've been home has been taken back from me. Every group or
9 club association has kicked me out because of this right here.
10 Even my church scrubbed my name off a plaque. So all of this
11 is humiliating, not only to me but to my family.

12 My mom is sick. They just -- they just diagnosed her
13 with dementia. I've been talking to advocacy groups on people
14 that's incarcerated and their parents die. My son, I'm raising
15 him. I don't want to raise another child behind bars. I
16 brought all this upon myself, understand. So even my wife,
17 she's guilty by association by being married to me. My wife
18 ain't did nothing wrong. I'm ten toes telling you, she never
19 did nothing wrong. Though, I did do wrong, as opposed to
20 putting two employees, I probably put 10 or 15. I did that,
21 your Honor. And I'm -- and I'm gratefully remorseful because
22 guess what, I've lost more than what I've gotten. I've lost
23 more than what I receive.

24 So I'm standing in front of you right now, today, to
25 ask you to have leniency on me. Yes, Chris, you've been here

1 before. I have. But God -- my God that I serve is a God of
2 second and third chances. And that's -- and that's -- and
3 that's what I'm here to ask you.

4 Yes, I filed motions because -- and no offense to
5 my -- my attorney because he -- he wasn't calling back, or he
6 had other cases. I done that. So guess what? I looked into
7 my case myself because I never received a -- a discovery. I
8 never received a grand jury transcript. I'm just telling you
9 right now, your Honor, I filed those motions because I don't
10 know what else to do. I'm -- I'm -- everything I had I lost.
11 I had a 800 credit score, your Honor. My credit core score is
12 a 400. Everything because of this. And, yes, I did wrong.
13 I'm not deterring from that.

14 All I'm asking you is to be like the God that I serve
15 and ask for another chance to do right by everyone around me.
16 My church, my family, my kids, my mom. Even society.

17 And that's what I have to say, your Honor.

18 MR. ADAMS: Your Honor, may I make one -- make the
19 record?

20 THE COURT: Yes.

21 MR. ADAMS: Judge, Mr. Scott has come to my office
22 three times during the -- before he pled guilty, and we've
23 reviewed the discovery in this case multiple times together.

24 THE COURT: I have no reason to think that we need to
25 re-visit any -- the plea of guilty.

1 MR. ADAMS: Thank you, Judge.

2 THE COURT: And I haven't been asked to.

3 Okay. Let's turn to 3553. The nature and
4 circumstances of the offense. I mean, the fraud on all who
5 were affected directly by it, as well as indirectly, is -- was
6 incredibly substantial. This wasn't like one time. I mean,
7 this was multiple -- multiple times, with a huge actual loss.

8 And your history and characteristics is -- as I said,
9 this is -- it has been repeated action. I mean, in some of
10 these, as much as I think that fraud is a really serious crime
11 and that fraud, under these circumstances, when everybody was
12 in literally dire jeopardy in all kinds of ways and there were
13 an awful lot of people that engaged in fraud, I probably taken
14 that into -- or might take that into consideration in certain
15 cases. But your history is just of not learning. Before I
16 guess I -- I have to doubt that. I don't know what's
17 happening -- happened with your current state case, but I do
18 notice that the arrest report said you had a driver's license,
19 or something, in a different name. But -- and by the time you
20 did this one, you weren't a young man. You knew -- you knew
21 what the consequences would be. You knew it was -- you
22 hopefully had learned from the identity theft in 2012, or
23 the -- there's a lot of aggravated -- bank fraud when you were
24 28. I mean, you weren't a child when you did those.

25 So I really think this history counts largely against

1 you. I understand that you cooperated or tried to cooperate
2 with the government in this case, and that you have pled
3 guilty. And I'm sympathetic about the situation with your
4 mother, and I think you had said your son as well.

5 But I also need the sentence to reflect the
6 seriousness of the offense, promote respect for the law, and
7 provide just punishment, afford adequate deterrence to criminal
8 conduct, protect the public from further crimes by you, and
9 then to impose a sentence that's sufficient but not greater
10 than necessary.

11 In this case, taking all of that into consideration, I
12 am going to impose a sentence of 70 months in the custody of
13 the Bureau of Prisons. I will not impose a fine. Oh, but it's
14 to be followed by three years of supervised release.

15 Restitution, at least according to the sentencing
16 recommendation from probation, is \$567,333. There's also a
17 \$100 special assessment that I must impose. And I'll note that
18 I think I remember reading that there's a prior restitution
19 that has not been paid. Am I correct in that?

20 MR. ORTEGA: Yes, your Honor. I do believe that there
21 are some outstanding debts that Mr. Scott owes that are
22 detailed --

23 THE COURT: 100 and some thousand dollars, or
24 something?

25 MR. ORTEGA: -- in the PSR. Right, that was in the

1 PSR, Judge. I would defer to Mr. Christiansen, Officer
2 Christiansen. But I do -- I do recall reading there were some
3 outstanding debts that were described in the PSR.

4 OFFICER CHRISTIANSEN: Judge, yes, during the
5 presentence investigation I referenced some -- a database that
6 basically keeps track of restitution obligations or criminal
7 financial penalties. And what's reflected in the presentence
8 report is what is reflected in there.

9 THE COURT: All right. Well, whether it's accurate or
10 not isn't really -- isn't going into the sentence that I'm
11 imposing, but I just note that.

12 I think that's -- oh, wait a minute, the conditions of
13 supervised release. There are numerous ones stated. Do you
14 wish to waive reading of them, and do you agree to them?

15 MR. ADAMS: Judge, we'll waive reading, and we agree.
16 I've reviewed these with Mr. Scott.

17 THE COURT: Okay. And is that correct?

18 THE DEFENDANT: Yes, ma'am.

19 THE COURT: Okay. Have I missed anything?

20 MR. ADAMS: Your Honor, I would just ask that the
21 restitution be joint and severable, should the co-defendant be
22 found guilty.

23 THE COURT: If the co-defendant is found guilty, I --
24 it will be joint and several.

25 MR. ADAMS: Thank you, Judge.

1 THE COURT: Or up to the -- I mean, I -- I guess I
2 can't completely say that because I don't know what the amount
3 might be.

4 MR. ADAMS: Okay.

5 THE COURT: To the extent that they would be the same,
6 then they would be.

7 MR. ADAMS: Thank you, Judge.

8 THE COURT: So I can't in this judgment order say --

9 MR. ADAMS: Right.

10 THE COURT: -- that it's joint and several. But I
11 would, if there is a judgment order in the other, to the extent
12 that it is, I will.

13 MR. ORTEGA: I believe, your Honor, there was a --

14 THE COURT: That one we don't even have a trial date.

15 MR. ORTEGA: No, your Honor. Correct.

16 THE COURT: All right. Well, I assume we have a
17 status pretty soon.

18 MR. ORTEGA: That's correct, Judge.

19 THE COURT: All right. Well, then, you'll tell me
20 what we're doing at that point, all of you will that are
21 involved.

22 OFFICER CHRISTIANSEN: Your Honor, could I be --

23 THE COURT: You have 14 days to file a notice of
24 appeal. We need a date to report.

25 THE CLERK: September 26th.

1 OFFICER CHRISTIANSEN: Could I make one request,
2 Judge?

3 THE COURT: Yes.

4 OFFICER CHRISTIANSEN: I referenced it in the report.
5 We don't have a victim import spreadsheet from the government
6 detailing the information that's required for collection and
7 ultimate disbursement of the restitution. So I would just ask
8 that the U.S. Attorney's Office submit that to us.

9 THE COURT: Yes. Please provide that within the next
10 14 days. Okay?

11 MR. ORTEGA: Yes, your Honor.

12 THE COURT: I know you're busy, but we need that.
13 Okay. Thank you.

14 MR. ADAMS: Your Honor, Mr. Scott is requesting a
15 later surrender date. If we could get the first of the year,
16 if that's possible.

17 THE COURT: No. Quite frankly, I'm concerned about
18 him committing additional fraud.

19 MR. ORTEGA: A few more things, Judge, just before we
20 break. I believe we filed a motion for forfeiture. Can --
21 would the Court be able to just orally announce the forfeiture
22 judgment -- forfeiture order?

23 THE COURT: Okay. Any objection?

24 MR. ADAMS: No objection, your Honor.

25 THE COURT: All right. It's granted.

1 MR. ORTEGA: And then finally we move to dismiss
2 Counts 4 through 10 and 13 through 15.

3 THE COURT: All right. Okay.

4 MR. ORTEGA: Thank you, Judge.

5 THE COURT: Thank you.

6 MR. ADAMS: Thank you, your Honor.

7 (Proceedings concluded at 10:37 a.m.)

8 * * * * *

9 I certify that the foregoing is a correct transcript
10 from the record of proceedings in the above-entitled matter.

11 /s/Sandra M. Tennis
12 Sandra M. Tennis
Official Court Reporter

August 25, 2025
Date