



**Department of Justice**  
U.S. Attorney's Office  
Southern District of New York

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## **U.S. Attorney Announces The Arrest Of Five Individuals In Scheme To Steal Thousands Of Checks From New York City Human Resources Administration**

Geoffrey S. Berman, United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, William F. Sweeney Jr., Assistant Director-in-Charge of the New York Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI"), Margaret Garnett, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), and Michael Schmidt, New York State Commissioner of Taxation and Finance ("DTF"), announced the indictment of five individuals in a scheme to steal and deposit more than 4,000 rent subsidy checks worth more than \$2.7 million issued by the New York City Human Resources Administration ("HRA"), and the indictment of one person in a related scheme to defraud the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance. SALIFOU CONDE, SEKHOU TOURE, and SYLVAIN GNALI GNAHORE were arrested on September 16, 2019. ABRAHIM DUKURAY and ABOUBAKAR BAKAYOKO were arrested today and are expected to appear before U.S. Magistrate Judge Katharine H. Parker later today. ALSENY KEITA remains at large. The case is assigned to U.S. District Judge Valerie E. Caproni.

U.S. Attorney Geoffrey S. Berman said: "As alleged, these defendants carried out a reverse Robin Hood scheme, stealing funds intended to aid those in need of financial assistance to line their own pockets. The alleged thefts are an affront to the very notion of offering a helping hand; these people had their hands in the till. Now they face serious criminal charges."

FBI Assistant Director William F. Sweeney Jr. said: "Public assistance programs are established to help less fortunate families overcome their socio-economic challenges. When the system is corrupted by any means, to include fraud against the agencies that provide the financial assistance, everyone loses out. Not only is there less money available for those who need it most, but the taxpayers who fund these programs have been taken advantage of as well. As alleged, those arrested for their role in this scheme took money that didn't belong to them. They've since learned the consequences of their alleged actions."

DOI Commissioner Margaret Garnett said: "The City's Human Resources Administration relied on Salifou Conde to provide a service, delivering to HRA unclaimed rental supplement checks to ensure funds could be appropriately redistributed to New Yorkers. Instead, the defendant allegedly used his

access to steal thousands of checks, and with his co-conspirators, pocket millions in taxpayer dollars, according to the charges. DOI is proud to work with its partners, including the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District, to uncover schemes to defraud the government and steal public funds.”

Commissioner of Taxation and Finance Michael Schmidt said: “Individuals who attempt to defraud New York State and illegally pocket money they’re not entitled to must be held accountable. The fraudulent scheme alleged in this case unfairly places an additional tax burden on honest New Yorkers and will not be tolerated. We’ll continue to work with all levels of law enforcement to ensure a level playing field for all taxpayers.”

As alleged in the Indictment, which was unsealed today, and the previously filed criminal Complaints:[\[1\]](#)

HRA is an agency of the City of New York responsible for administering certain of the City’s public assistance programs. Among other things, HRA provides rental assistance to individuals and families with social service and economic needs. For individuals who qualify, HRA provides rental assistance by sending monthly rent supplement checks to landlords to cover a portion of the cost of documented expenses such as rent or storage costs.

HRA rent supplement checks that are undeliverable are sent back to the same P.O. Box in New York, New York. From there, a courier takes them from the P.O. Box back to HRA. CONDE took these undeliverable checks out of the mail.

Since in or about 2015, more than 4,000 HRA rent supplement checks worth more than \$2.7 million were fraudulently deposited into more than 50 bank accounts. CONDE, DUKURAY, KEITA, TOURE, and BAKAYOKO were part of a scheme to open these accounts using fictitious identities, obtain HRA supplement checks that could not reach their destination, deposit the checks into bank accounts, and then quickly withdraw cash.

GNAHORE was a member of a related scheme to obtain tax refund checks issued by the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance, manipulate the checks, deposit them in fraudulently opened bank accounts, and then quickly withdraw funds from those accounts.

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CONDE, 29, DUKURAY, 40, KEITA, 37, TOURE, 35, BAKAYOKO, 32, and GNAHORE, 43, are each charged with one count of wire fraud, which carries a maximum punishment of 20 years in prison; one count of bank fraud, which carries a maximum punishment of 30 years in prison; and one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud and bank fraud, which carries a maximum punishment of 30 years in prison. The maximum potential sentences in this case are prescribed by Congress and are provided here for informational purposes only, as any sentencing of the defendant will be determined by a judge.

Mr. Berman praised the outstanding work of the FBI, DOI, and DTF.

This case is being handled by the Office’s General Crimes Unit. Assistant United States Attorney Kedar S. Bhatia is in charge of the prosecution.