

Former Twitter employee sold people's private information to Saudi Arabian government

August 22 2022, by Rick Hurd



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

A federal jury has convicted a one-time Twitter employee and Walnut Creek resident of acting as an unregistered agent for a foreign government and unlawfully using Twitter information, authorities said.

Ahmad Abouammo, 44, a resident of Seattle, also was convicted of conspiracy, obstruction, wire fraud, international money laundering and falsification of records in a [federal investigation](#), according to a statement from U.S. Attorney Stephanie M. Hinds of the Northern District of California. The jury came to its verdict on Aug. 10 following a two-week trial.

The crimes stemmed from a bribery scheme aimed at accessing, monitoring and conveying user information to officials of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its royal family, authorities said.

Abouammo could receive a maximum 10-year federal prison sentence for the charge of acting as a foreign agent and a maximum of 20 years for each of the other counts.

Court documents and evidence presented at the trial showed that Abouammo used his position as Twitter's Media Partnerships Manager for the Middle East-North Africa region to participate in the scheme, Hinds said. Abouammo was responsible for protecting Twitter user information and to disclose violations of Twitter's security policies.

Gifts from those with business dealings with the company were supposed to be reported, but Hinds said they were not. When questioned about it, Hinds said Abouammo lied to the FBI and falsified a document.

The evidence at trial showed that Abouammo began receiving bribes from a Saudi Arabian official as early as December 2014. According to Hinds, Abouammo met with a foreign official in London and received a Hublot watch that Abouammo later said he sold for \$42,000 on Craigslist. Hinds said Abouammo began accessing the private information of certain Twitter accounts, one of whom was a critic of the Saudi Royal Family.

Trial evidence also showed that Abouammo went to Lebanon in February 2015 and opened a [bank account](#) in the name of his father, who lived in the country. Abouammo received access to the account; a short time later, \$100,000 was deposited into the account from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

According to Hinds, Abouammo laundered that \$100,000 by sending it to the United States in small wire transfers and using false descriptions. Shortly after Abouammo left Twitter in May 2021, he received another \$100,000 into the same account, along with a note of apology for the delayed payment, Hinds said.

The FBI questioned Abouammo in October 2018. Hinds said trial evidence showed he lied to the agency and falsified an invoice for one of the payments he'd received from a foreign official.

FBI agents arrested him on Nov. 5, 2019, and [federal grand jury](#) returned a superseding indictment on July 28, 2020.

Abouammo's sentencing date has not been scheduled, authorities said.

©2022 MediaNews Group, Inc.

Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Citation: Former Twitter employee sold people's private information to Saudi Arabian government (2022, August 22) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2022-08-twitter-employee-sold-people-private.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--