

# Man Sentenced for Stealing from PayPal Accounts in Wire Fraud Scheme

[justice.gov/opa/pr/man-sentenced-stealing-paypal-accounts-wire-fraud-scheme](https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/man-sentenced-stealing-paypal-accounts-wire-fraud-scheme)



Press Release

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## For Immediate Release

Office of Public Affairs

A Texas man was sentenced today to five years in prison followed by three years of supervised release for his conduct in connection with a scheme to buy 38,000 compromised PayPal account credentials from an illegal online marketplace, and then use those credentials to steal money from the rightful PayPal account owners. In addition to the term of imprisonment, the defendant was ordered to pay \$1.4 million in restitution.

Marcos Ponce, 37, of Austin, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit wire fraud in October 2021. According to court documents, from at least as early as November 2015 and continuing through in or about November 2018, Ponce and his co-conspirators worked together to establish buyer accounts on a particular illegal online marketplace (Marketplace A). Marketplace A functioned as an illegal market for stolen payment account credentials and associated personally identifying information (PII). The co-conspirators purchased over 38,000 stolen PayPal account login credentials.

In addition, Ponce and his co-conspirators developed social engineering techniques in order to trick unwitting third parties into accepting money transfers from the compromised PayPal accounts, and then transferring the money into accounts controlled by members of the conspiracy.

“The Justice Department remains firmly committed to protecting the American people from fraudsters like this defendant,” said Assistant Attorney General Kenneth A. Polite, Jr. of the Justice Department’s Criminal Division. “May today’s sentencing send a clear message to would-be thieves: there are real-world consequences for online crimes.”

“This prosecution and sentence send a powerful message that the cyberworld is not a haven for criminals, and law enforcement will work tirelessly to bring cybercriminals to justice,” said U.S. Attorney Ashley C. Hoff for the Western District of Texas.

“Today’s sentencing sends a message that the FBI will pursue cybercriminals across the globe. Hiding behind a computer does not mean you can stay anonymous or out of reach of law enforcement,” said Assistant Director in Charge Steven M. D’Antuono of the FBI’s Washington Field Office. “With the assistance of FBI cyber task forces across the country, the FBI will diligently and aggressively work to identify and locate criminals, regardless of where they operate.”

The case was investigated by the FBI’s Washington Field Office, with significant assistance from the FBI San Antonio - Austin Cyber Task Force.

Senior Counsel Laura-Kate Bernstein of the Justice Department’s Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Matthew Devlin for the Western District of Texas prosecuted the case, with substantial assistance from Assistant U.S. Attorney Demian Ahn for the District of Columbia.

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## **Topic**

Cybercrime

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