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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**QUEENS MAN SENTENCED IN THEFT OF FEDERAL PANDEMIC RELIEF FUNDS**

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced that Papa Diakhate was sentenced to a maximum of three years in prison for stealing more than \$1 million in federal pandemic relief funds for bogus companies he created and spending over \$350,000 of the money on personal expenses, including travel and luxury goods.

District Attorney Katz said: “At the height of the pandemic, the health crisis was exacting a devastating human and economic toll around the world, especially here in New York. Amidst the misery, the defendant saw an opportunity and shamelessly schemed to profit from the financial hardship wrought by Covid. For his thievery, he is now being held accountable.”

Diakhate, 54, of Astoria Boulevard in East Elmhurst, pleaded guilty to one count of grand larceny in December and was sentenced by Supreme Court Justice Jerry Iannece to one to three years in prison.

According to the charges:

- Diakhate submitted Federal Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan applications for two bogus businesses. The applications listed Diakhate as the sole owner and that the businesses were located at 162-02 Jamaica Avenue in Jamaica. Both applications were approved.
- On June 29, 2020, and July 14, 2020, a total of approximately \$1.2 million was deposited into Citibank business accounts owned by Diakhate.
- Diakhate spent \$14,000 on a Rolex watch; \$36,874 at Amazon; \$16,461 at Saks Fifth Avenue; \$15,377 at Bergdorf Goodman; and \$13,626 at Bloomingdales; and \$56,247 on travel.
- Before Citibank rescinded the loans, Diakhate had spent more than \$350,000 on personal expenses, contrary to the stipulation that monies be used exclusively for the operation of the businesses, including retaining workers and maintaining payroll, or making mortgage, lease and utility payments.

The investigation was conducted by NYPD Detective Investigator Jean Remy under the supervision of Lieutenant William Negus and Sergeant Thomas J. Rouse and by Queens County District Attorney forensic accountant Vivian Tunncliff under the supervision of QDA senior forensic accountant Joseph Plonski.

Assistant District Attorney Daniel Lewis, Unit Chief of the Revenue Crimes Unit within the District Attorney's Frauds Bureau, prosecuted the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Joseph T. Conley III, Bureau Chief, and Hana Kim, Deputy Bureau Chief, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for the Investigations Division, Gerard A. Brave.

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**Note to Editors:** Archived press releases are available at [www.queensda.org](http://www.queensda.org).

