

Real Life Catch Me If You Can Con Posed As A Pilot For Years To Get Free Travel

A Florida man who worked for American Airlines, pulled off an extraordinary scheme by pretending to be a pilot to get hundreds of free flights on airlines. He traveled the world like a real-life Frank Abagnale for years before he was caught in San Francisco trying to board a flight to Australia.

He certainly knew how to game the system. After all he was an airline worker, he just wasn't the pilot that he claimed to be.

A Simple Scam That Worked for Years

Alexander worked for American Airlines starting in November 2015. But he was never a pilot or flight attendant. That didn't stop him from accessing another airline's employee travel portal, logging in and then booking free flights reserved for flight crews.

Court documents show he was an "escort" for American Airlines according to his identity documents.

The scheme was surprisingly basic. Alexander would log into the travel system of a major Florida-based airline and make reservations using fake pilot or flight attendant credentials. The system generated six-digit codes called Passenger Name Records for each booking.

After booking the flights, he would simply go to the airport and board the flights, getting VIP treatments the whole way.



Prosecutors say Alexander pulled off this fraud from August 2018 through September 2024.

He Did It Over and Over Again, And Posed As A Pilot And Flight Attendant

According to prosecutors, Alexander booked free flights many times. In total, Alexander flew on 34 flights with the airline carrier without paying for any of them by posing as a flight attendant who worked for other airlines.

Over the 34 flights, Alexander claimed through the airline carrier's website application process—a process that required an applicant to select whether they were a pilot or flight attendant and provide their employer, date of hire, and badge number information—that he worked for seven different airlines and had approximately 30 different badge numbers and dates of hire.

The evidence at trial also showed that Alexander posed as a flight attendant on three other airline carriers. Ultimately, Alexander booked more than 120 free flights by falsely claiming to be a flight attendant.

The Airport Security Breach

Alexander's scheme went beyond just getting free flights. On July 22, 2020, prosecutors say he used fraud to enter secure areas of Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport.

This charge carries serious weight in an era of heightened airport security. The indictment says Alexander intended to commit a felony when he entered the restricted area.

Why the Case Matters

Alexander's case exposed some weak spots in how airlines verify employee credentials. The scheme worked for years because the system relied on the fact that employees would tell the truth about who they were. Turns out that simply wasn't the case.

Experts say cases like this push airlines to strengthen their employee verification systems. Some carriers now require additional authentication for employee travel bookings.

Alexander faces serious federal charges. The wire fraud counts each carry up to 20 years in prison and fines of \$250,000 or twice the amount he gained from the scheme.

The airport security charge adds another potential 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

Read Indictment

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA
24-CR-20466-SCOLA/LETT

CASE NO. _____

18 U.S.C. § 1343

18 U.S.C. § 1036(a)

18 U.S.C. § 981(a)(1)(C)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

v.

TIRON ALEXANDER,

Defendant.

_____/

INDICTMENT

The Grand Jury charges that:

GENERAL ALLEGATIONS

At all times relevant to this Indictment:

Defendant and Relevant Parties

1. Defendant **TIRON ALEXANDER** was a resident of the United States.
2. Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport was located in the Southern District of Florida.
3. Airline 1 was headquartered in Miramar, Florida, and was a major United States international passenger airline that flew to more than 60 destinations, including Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport.
4. Airline 2 was headquartered in Dallas, Texas.
5. The computer servers associated with Airline 1's reservation system for airline employees were located in Miami, Florida.

6. From on or about November 30, 2015, and continuing through the present, **TIRON ALEXANDER** worked for Airline 2. **ALEXANDER** was never a pilot or flight attendant.

Airline Employee Travel Benefits and Reservations

7. Airline pilots and flight attendants were entitled to certain travel privileges based on their position, seniority, and tenure. These privileges included the ability to obtain no-cost flight reservations on their employer airline and other airlines with which their employer airline maintained reciprocal interline travel agreements.

8. These tickets, if obtained by a pilot or flight attendant, were commonly referred to as non-revenue travel.

9. Each time a flight reservation was made, a six-digit alphanumeric code known as a Passenger Name Record ("PNR") was generated, along with reservation information contained in the airline's electronic reservation system that set forth the identity and travel plans of the passenger.

COUNTS 1-4
Wire Fraud
(18 U.S.C. § 1343)

1. The General Allegations section of this Indictment is re-alleged and incorporated by reference as if fully set forth herein.

2. Beginning on a date unknown to the Grand Jury, but no later than on or about August 14, 2018, and continuing through at least on or about September 14, 2024, in Miami-Dade and Broward Counties, in the Southern District of Florida, and elsewhere, the defendant,

TIRON ALEXANDER,

did knowingly, and with the intent to defraud, devise, and intend to devise, a scheme and artifice to defraud, and to obtain money and property by means of materially false and fraudulent pretenses, representations, and promises, knowing that the pretenses, representations, and

promises were false and fraudulent when made, and for the purpose of executing the scheme and artifice, did knowingly transmit and cause to be transmitted, by means of wire communication in interstate commerce, certain writings, signs, signals, pictures, and sounds, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1343.

PURPOSE OF THE SCHEME AND ARTIFICE

3. It was the purpose of the scheme and artifice for the defendant to unlawfully enrich himself by, among other things, falsely and fraudulently representing to airlines that he was a pilot or flight attendant in order to obtain airline tickets free of charge, to which the defendant was not entitled, for his personal use, and to further the scheme and artifice.

MANNER AND MEANS OF THE SCHEME AND ARTIFICE

The manner and means by which **TIRON ALEXANDER** sought to accomplish the purpose of the scheme and artifice included, among other things, the following:

4. **TIRON ALEXANDER** accessed and caused to be accessed airlines' travel portals where pilots and flight attendants could reserve non-revenue travel.

5. **ALEXANDER** made and caused to be made false and fraudulent representations to the airlines, including that **ALEXANDER** was a pilot or flight attendant, in order to obtain travel benefits, including free airline flights, reserved for pilots and flight attendants.

6. As a result of the false and fraudulent representations, **ALEXANDER** caused the airlines to issue free airline tickets that were otherwise designated for pilots and flight attendants.

7. **ALEXANDER** then took flights using the free airline tickets designated for pilots and flight attendants.

USE OF THE WIRES

8. On or about the dates specified as to each count below, in Miami-Dade and Broward Counties, in the Southern District of Florida, and elsewhere, **TIRON ALEXANDER**, for the purpose of executing and in furtherance of the aforesaid scheme and artifice to defraud, and to obtain money and property by means of materially false and fraudulent pretenses, representations and promises, knowing that the pretenses, representations and promises were false and fraudulent when made, did knowingly transmit and cause to be transmitted in interstate and foreign commerce, by means of wire communications, certain writings, signs, signals, pictures, and sounds:

<u>COUNT</u>	<u>APPROXIMATE DATE</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION OF WIRE</u>
1	August 25, 2020	A reservation request in connection with flight reservation number OI8VVA, causing wire transmission from outside the State of Florida to a computer within the Southern District of Florida.
2	May 5, 2021	A reservation request in connection with flight reservation number WGBG2G, causing wire transmission from outside the State of Florida to a computer within the Southern District of Florida.
3	June 7, 2022	A reservation request in connection with flight reservation number MJDBGQ, causing wire transmission from outside the State of Florida to a computer within the Southern District of Florida.
4	September 14, 2024	A reservation request in connection with flight reservation number SHFSTF, causing wire transmission from outside the State of Florida to a computer within the Southern District of Florida.

In violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1343.

COUNT 5
Entry by False Pretenses to Any Secure Area of Any Airport
(18 U.S.C. § 1036)

1. The General Allegations section of this Indictment is re-alleged and incorporated by reference as if fully set forth herein.

2. On or about July 22, 2020, in Broward County, in the Southern District of Florida, and elsewhere, the defendant,

TIRON ALEXANDER,

by any fraud and false pretense, entered and attempted to enter any secure area of any airport, that is, Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1036(a).

It is further alleged that this offense was committed with the intent to commit a felony.

FORFEITURE ALLEGATIONS

1. The allegations of this Indictment are hereby re-alleged and by this reference fully incorporated herein for the purpose of alleging forfeiture to the United States of America of certain property in which the defendant, **TIRON ALEXANDER**, has an interest.

2. Upon conviction of a violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1343, as alleged in this Indictment, the defendant shall forfeit to the United States any property, real or personal, which constitutes or is derived from proceeds traceable to such offense, pursuant to Title 18, United States Code, Section 981(a)(1)(C).

All pursuant to Title 18, United States Code, Section 981(a)(1)(C) and the procedures set forth in Title 21, United States Code, Section 853, as incorporated by Title 28, United States Code, Section 2461(c).

A TRUE BILL

FOREPERSON



MARKENZY LAPOINTE
UNITED STATES ATTORNEY

MICHAEL C. SHEPHERD
ASSISTANT UNITED STATES ATTORNEY