



SEC OIG INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY

September 24, 2026



SEC OIG investigated fraudulent court order used to de-index an SEC settlement

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) Office of Inspector General (OIG) initiated an investigation based on a referral by Division of Enforcement (ENF) staff in one of the SEC's regional offices. ENF referred to the OIG a reported fictitious U.S. District Court order submitted to an internet search engine in support of a request to de-index (i.e., remove from internet search results) an SEC settlement in a previously closed ENF investigation. The ENF also received email requests to remove settlement agreement information from SEC websites purportedly on behalf of the previously investigated entity (the Entity).

The OIG conferred with the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia and found that the court order was in fact fabricated. We subpoenaed records related to emails sent to the internet search engine and the SEC in support of the de-indexing/removal requests and identified the sender's internet protocol addresses.

We interviewed legal counsel for the Entity and discovered that it hired a "reputation management" firm (the Firm) to assist with "search engine optimization." The Entity hired the Firm to remove harmful internet links related to the Entity's business. Unbeknownst to the Entity, the Firm, largely based overseas, created the fake court order and sent emails to the SEC seeking de-indexing.

We ensured that the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, and the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center were aware of the fake court order and the overseas firm and closed our investigation.

