

Department of Justice

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Western District of New York

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RUSSIAN MAN EXTRADITED TO THE UNITED STATES FROM FINLAND

BUFFALO, N.Y.--U.S. Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr. announced today that Igor Vassiliev, 38, a citizen of Russia, was arraigned in Federal Court in Buffalo on an indictment, handed down by a federal grand jury in August of 2005, charging him with conspiracy to commit health care fraud and mail fraud, and health care fraud. The charges relate to a scheme involving staged accidents perpetrated in Western New York in May through October of 2001.

The defendant, the subject of an arrest warrant issued when the indictment was returned, was arrested in July, 2012, in Finland, based on an Interpol Red Notice generated as a result of the indictment warrant issued in the Western District of New York. Following a formal extradition request filed by the United States in October, the Finnish government ordered that Vassiliev be returned to the United States to face the charges in the indictment. Based on information provided by the United States Marshal's office, Vassiliev is only the third person ever extradited from Finland to the United States.

Assistant U.S. Attorney John E. Rogowski, who presented the case to the Grand Jury and who has handled the prosecution of all the co-defendants named in the indictment, stated that the defendant is accused of participating in two staged car collisions in order to defraud insurance companies who provided no-fault insurance coverage. The insurance companies paid medical clinics and health care providers for unnecessary medical treatments rendered to certain of Vassiliev's co-defendants who falsely claimed to be injured in the staged collisions. In addition, Vassiliev and certain co-defendants falsely claimed to have sustained serious physical injuries in the staged collisions in order to collect personal injury settlements from insurance companies.

Vassiliev is one of 30 defendants charged in the indictment. To date, 27 have been convicted. Charges were dismissed against two defendants and a third defendant remains.

In addition, six other individuals not named in the indictment, including two doctors and a lawyer, were convicted of health care fraud and immigration fraud.

The indictment is the culmination of an investigation conducted by the Western New York Health Care Fraud Task Force consisting of agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Christopher M. Piehota, the Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation Division, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Toni Weirauch, the United States Department of Health and Human Services - Office of Inspector General, United States Postal Inspection Service, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Kevin Niland, United States Postal Service - Office of Inspector General, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Robert Lapina, the United States Department of Defense - Criminal Investigation Service, the United States Food and Drug Administration - Office of Criminal Investigation, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Mark Dragonetti, and the New York State Insurance Fraud Bureau. Other law enforcement agencies involved in the investigation were Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge James C. Spero, the United States Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, Office of Labor Racketeering and Fraud Investigations, under the direction of Robert L. Panella, Special Agent in Charge, New York Region, the Niagara County District Attorney's Office, under the direction of Michael Violante and the Amherst Police Department, under the direction of Chief John Askey.

The fact that a defendant has been charged with a crime is merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

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