



HRSP NEWSLETTER

U.S. Department of Justice, Criminal Division, Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section

February 2023

Man Charged with Immigration Fraud for Concealing War Crime Charge in Croatia

On January 26, an Ohio man was arraigned on criminal charges related to his alleged false statements to U.S. immigration and law enforcement officials about his military service and involvement in a politically and ethnically-motivated attack on civilians in Croatia during the civil war in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

According to the indictment, Yugoslav Vidic, 54, of Parma Heights, allegedly made multiple false statements in his successful application to become a lawful permanent resident, including falsely stating that his only past military service was in the Yugoslav Army from 1988 to 1989 and omitting his service in the Serb Army of Krajina and its predecessors from 1991 to 1995. The indictment alleges Vidic falsely stated that he had never been charged with breaking any law even though he had been convicted in absentia in 1998 of a war crime in Croatia, and falsely stated that he had never participated in killing a person because of ethnic origin or political opinion. Vidic allegedly participated in an attack by ethnic Serb military forces in September 1991 in which Vidic singled out and took away at gunpoint a Croatian civilian who had recently shaken hands with Croatia's then-president, Franjo Tudjman, who supported Croatian independence from Yugoslavia. The victim was never seen alive again and his body was later exhumed from a mass grave.

Vidic immigrated to the United States as a refugee in 1999. His application to become a lawful permanent resident was approved in 2005. Vidic is also accused of lying to law enforcement agents in 2017 when questioned about his immigration application. Vidic is charged with one count of possessing a green card that was procured by means of materially false statements and one count of making false statements to a federal agent. If convicted, he faces a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison for the first charge and a maximum penalty of five years in prison for the second.

Assistant Attorney General Kenneth A. Polite, Jr. of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, U.S. Attorney Michelle M. Baeppler for the Northern District of Ohio, Assistant Director Luis Quesada of the FBI's Criminal Investigative Division, Special Agent in Charge Gregory D. Nelsen of the FBI Cleveland Field Office, Acting Executive Associate Director Steve Francis of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and Special Agent in Charge Angie Salazar of the HSI Detroit Field Office made the announcement.

HSI and the FBI are investigating the case with coordination provided by the Human Rights Violators and War Crimes Center (HRVWCC), including the FBI's International Human Rights Unit (IHRU). The Department of Justice thanks the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration of the Republic of Croatia, which were both instrumental in furthering this investigation.

Trial Attorney Patrick Jasperse of the Criminal Division's Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Matthew W. Shepherd and Jerome J. Teresinski for the Northern District of Ohio are prosecuting the case. The Justice Department's Office of International Affairs also provided assistance.

Members of the public who have information about human rights violators in the United States are urged to contact U.S. law enforcement through the HSI tip line at 1-866-DHS-2-ICE (1-866-347-2423) or its online tip form at <https://www.ice.gov/webform/ice-tip-form> or the FBI tip line at 1-800-CALLFBI (1-800-225-5324) or its online tip form at <https://tips.fbi.gov/>.

To remove your name from our mailing list, let us know by sending a reply to this email.

If you wish to be placed on our mailing list, send an email to HRSPOutreach@usdoj.gov.

For more information about HRSP, please visit our website: <http://www.justice.gov/criminal/hrsp/>.