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13 INDICTED IN "GREEN CARD" UNDERCOVER BRIBERY STING

CHICAGO – Federal agents today began arresting defendants in Chicago, Portland, Ore., Los Angeles and Daytona Beach, Fla., who are among 13 individuals indicted on federal charges in Chicago for allegedly bribing an undercover Immigration official to obtain alien registration receipt cards, commonly known as “green cards,” which allow legal permanent residency in the United States. The charges stem from an undercover investigation in which the defendants, in various combinations with one another, allegedly paid \$5,000 cash bribes to an Immigration officer -- who in 2000 and early 2001 was posing as a corrupt official at a purported travel agency on the northwest side of Chicago -- to purchase fraudulent green cards for at least 31 “clients” who were charged significantly more than \$5,000 by some of the defendants. All 13 defendants were charged in a 24-count federal grand jury indictment that was returned on Feb. 13 and unsealed today after the initial arrests were made, announced Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, together with Brian R. Perryman, District Director of the Immigration and Naturalization Service; Thomas J. Kneir, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation; and William Cotter, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Social Security Administration’s Office of Inspector General in Chicago.

Seven of the defendants were charged with conspiracy to obtain fraudulent green cards and to bribe an Immigration and Naturalization District Adjudications Officer to influence the issuance of fraudulent green cards and to assist aliens fraudulently obtain U.S. citizenship. The conspiracy count alleges that between August 1999 and October 2002, these seven defendants recruited aliens from throughout the United States, the former Soviet Union and elsewhere, who wished to acquire legal permanent residency and told them that they knew a corrupt INS officer in Chicago who would issue green cards for a cash bribe. Neither the defendants nor their clients knew, however, that the INS officer was acting in an undercover capacity.

According to the indictment, during the course of nine trips to Chicago from Portland and elsewhere between January 2000 and January 2001, the defendants brought at least 31 “client” aliens to an undercover business called G.S. Golden Travel, located at 5122 West Belmont in Chicago, where they paid a total of approximately \$161,500 in cash bribes to the undercover INS officer to obtain fraudulent green cards. Each of the client aliens -- six of whom were indicted -- allegedly paid significantly more than the \$5,000 bribe to his or her co-defendants to obtain a green card.

In many instances following such trips, one or more defendants returned to Portland and divided the proceeds with the alleged ringleader, **Ilya Adamidov**, at a bar he operated called Union Jack’s Pub, in Portland, the indictment alleges. It also seeks forfeiture of \$325,000 from Adamidov as proceeds of the alleged crimes.

Adamidov, 43, of Portland, surrendered to federal authorities this afternoon in Portland. Several other defendants also were expected to self-surrender, while still others were arrested, including two in the Chicago area, **Alexi Petrov**, 34, of Roselle, Ill., and **Leonid Matushevskiy**, 34, of Buffalo Grove, Ill. Petrov and Matushevskiy were ordered held in federal custody pending a

detention hearing at 2 p.m. next Wednesday March 5 before U.S. Magistrate Judge Martin Ashman. Five defendants are fugitives whose exact whereabouts are unknown, other than they are believed to have left the United States and returned to Eastern Europe.

Among the particular acts that formed the alleged conspiracy, two defendants – **Alikhan Kharsiev** and **Rustam Tukhfetullo** – paid \$100,000 to defendant **Roman Muklanovich** to acquire green cards for themselves, according to the indictment. Separately, Adamidov allegedly offered to launder bribe proceeds received by the undercover INS officer by depositing the money into an untraceable bank account in the Cayman Islands, and later accepted \$55,000 in cash from the undercover agent to do just that.

The defendants and the charges against them are as follows:

Ilya Adamidov, 43 (5/11/59), of Portland; one count of conspiracy, 16 counts of bribery and three counts of money laundering; expected to self-surrender in Portland;

Roman Muklanovich, 31 (6/18/71), of Portland; conspiracy, eight counts bribery; expected to self-surrender in Portland;

Dale Barron, 45 (7/10/57), of Corbitt, Ore.; conspiracy, four counts bribery; expected to self-surrender in Portland;

Eugene Agueev, 43 (2/12/60), of Los Angeles; conspiracy, three counts bribery; whereabouts unknown;

Marina Agueev, 37 (2/27/66), of Los Angeles; conspiracy, one count bribery; arrested in Los Angeles;

Youri Kriventchev, 57 (7/28/45), of Seattle, Wash., area; conspiracy, one count bribery; whereabouts unknown;

Alex Kriventchev, 26 (2/22/77), of Seattle, Wash., area; conspiracy, one count bribery; arrested in Daytona Beach, Fla.;

Alexei Petrov, 34 (5/21/68), of Roselle, Ill.; conspiracy, two counts bribery; arrested in Chicago area;

Leonid Matushevskiy, 34 (3/29/69), of Buffalo Grove.; conspiracy, one count bribery; arrested in Chicago area;

Elena Kopaigora, 31 (8/19/71), of Los Angeles; conspiracy, three counts bribery; whereabouts unknown;

Alikhan Kharsiev, 46 (6/10/56), whereabouts unknown; two counts bribery; whereabouts unknown;

Rustam Tukhfetullov, 43 (11/21/59), Los Angeles, two counts bribery; arrested in Los Angeles; and

Mousslim Tovbulatov, 25 (8/19/77), Edison, N. J.; conspiracy, two counts bribery; whereabouts unknown.

Four other defendants have already been prosecuted in Chicago in connection with this same investigation.

If convicted, the conspiracy count carries a maximum penalty of 5 years in prison and a maximum fine of \$250,000; each count of bribery carries a maximum penalty of 15 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine on each count; and each count of money laundering against Adamidov alone carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison and a maximum fine of \$500,000. As an alternative, the Court may impose a fine totaling twice the gain of the defendant or twice the gross loss to any victim, whichever is greater. The Court, however, would determine the appropriate sentence to be imposed under the United States Sentencing Guidelines.

The government is being represented by Assistant United States Attorneys Terry Kinney and Jeff Cramer.

The public is reminded that an indictment contains only charges and is not evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent and are entitled to a fair trial at which the government has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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