

# JUSTICE NEWS

## Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

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### **Russian National Pleads Guilty in Connection with Conspiracy to Work for Russian Intelligence**

Evgeny Buryakov, aka Zhenya, 41, pleaded guilty today to conspiring to act in the United States as an agent of the Russian Federation without providing prior notice to the Attorney General.

The guilty plea was announced by Assistant Attorney General for National Security John P. Carlin and U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara of the Southern District of New York.

“Evgeny Buryakov pleaded guilty to covertly working as a Russian agent in the United States without notifying the Attorney General,” said Assistant Attorney General Carlin. “Foreign nations who attempt to illegally gather economic and other intelligence information through espionage pose a direct threat to U.S. national security. The National Security Division will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to identify and hold accountable those who illegally operate as covert agents within the United States.”

“An unregistered intelligence agent, under cover of being a legitimate banker, gathers intelligence on the streets of New York City, trading coded messages with Russian spies who send the clandestinely collected information back to Moscow,” said U.S. Attorney Bharara. “This sounds like a plotline for a Cold War-era movie, but in reality, Evgeny Buryakov pled guilty today to a federal crime for his role in just such a scheme. More than two decades after the end of the Cold War, Russian spies still seek to operate in our midst under the cover of secrecy. But in New York, thanks to the work of the FBI and the prosecutors in my office, attempts to conduct unlawful espionage will not be overlooked. They will be investigated and prosecuted.”

According to indictment, other court filings and statements made during court proceedings:

Beginning in at least 2012, Buryakov worked in the United States as an agent of Russia’s foreign intelligence agency, known as the SVR. Buryakov operated under non-official cover, meaning he entered and remained in the United States as a private citizen, posing as an employee in the New York office of a Russian bank, Vnesheconombank (VEB). SVR agents operating under such non-official cover (NOCs) are typically subject to less scrutiny by the host government and, in many cases, are never identified as intelligence agents by the host government. As a result, an NOC is an extremely valuable intelligence asset for the SVR.

Federal law prohibits individuals from acting as agents of foreign governments within the United States without prior notification to the Attorney General. Department of Justice records indicate that Buryakov never notified the Attorney General that he was, in fact, an agent of the Russia Federation.

Buryakov worked in New York with at least two other SVR agents, Igor Sporyshev and Victor Podobnyy. From on or about Nov. 22, 2010, to on or about Nov. 21, 2014, Sporyshev officially served as a trade representative of the Russian Federation in New York. From on or about Dec. 13, 2012, to on or about Sept. 12, 2013, Podobnyy officially served as an attaché to the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations. The investigation, however, showed that Sporyshev and Podobnyy also worked as officers of

the SVR. Sporyshev and Podobnyy were charged along with Buryakov in January 2015, however, Sporyshev and Podobnyy no longer lived in the United States at that time and were not arrested.

The directives from the SVR to Buryakov, Sporyshev and Podobnyy, as well as to other covert SVR agents acting within the United States, included requests to gather intelligence on, among other subjects, potential U.S. sanctions against Russian banks and the United States' efforts to develop alternative energy resources.

During the course of their work as covert SVR agents in the United States, Buryakov, Sporyshev and Podobnyy regularly met and communicated using clandestine methods and coded messages in order to exchange intelligence-related information while shielding their associations with one another as SVR agents. Sporyshev was responsible for relaying intelligence assignments from the SVR to Buryakov.

On or about March 28, 2014, Sporyshev was recorded telling Buryakov that he needed help researching the "effects of economic sanctions on our country," among other things. A few days later, on April 2, 2014, Sporyshev called Buryakov and stated, in an intercepted conversation, that he had not seen Buryakov in a while, and asked to meet Buryakov outside VEB's office in New York in 20 minutes. A court-authorized search of Buryakov's computer at VEB revealed that, at around the time of this telephone call, Buryakov conducted the following internet searches: "sanctions Russia consequences" [sic] and "sanctions Russia impact."

Two days later, on April 4, 2014, Buryakov called Sporyshev and in an intercepted conversation, stated that he "wrote you an order list," and suggested that they meet. Approximately 20 minutes later, Sporyshev met Buryakov in the driveway of Buryakov's home. Their encounter, which was captured by a video surveillance camera located near Buryakov's residence, lasted approximately two minutes. On the video footage, the defendants appeared to exchange a small object.

In the summer of 2014, Buryakov met multiple times with a confidential source working for the FBI and an FBI undercover employee, both of whom purported to be working on a casino development project in Russia. During these meetings, Buryakov accepted documents that were purportedly obtained from a U.S. government agency and which supposedly contained information potentially useful to Russia, including information about U.S. sanctions against Russia.

Buryakov will be sentenced on May 25, 2016, where he faces a statutory maximum sentence of five years in prison.

Assistant Attorney General Carlin joined U.S. Attorney Bharara in praising the investigative work of the FBI's Counterintelligence Division.

The prosecution is being handled by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Emil J. Bove III, Brendan F. Quigley and Stephen J. Ritchin of the Southern District of New York, with assistance provided by Senior Trial Attorney Heather Schmidt of the National Security Division's Counterintelligence and Export Control Section.

### Buryakov Plea Agreement

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