

Press Release

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U.S. SECRET SERVICE AND IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT INVESTIGATION RESULTS IN EXTRADITION OF SERGEI LITVINENKO Defendant in massive credit card and identity theft scheme extradited from Croatia

(Las Vegas, N.V.) A Ukrainian national charged as part of a multiagency federal investigation into a worldwide online marketplace for stolen personal and financial information was arraigned in federal court Monday following his extradition Friday from Croatia.

Sergei Litvinenko, 37, pleaded not guilty Monday to a federal racketeering charge stemming from "Operation Open Market," a long-term undercover probe by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the U.S. Secret Service, and members of the former Las Vegas-based Southwestern Identity Theft and Fraud Task Force (SWIFT). The case is being prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Nevada.

Litvinenko, who arrived in Las Vegas Friday evening under U.S. Marshals Service escort, is accused of one count of conspiracy to engage in a racketeer influenced corrupt organization (RICO) in the District of Nevada. It is alleged Litvinenko was a member of an online criminal organization known as *Carder.su* operating under the alias "Dorbik." During Monday's court appearance, U.S. Magistrate Judge Magistrate Judge Nancy Koope ordered Litvinenko held without bond.

Litvinenko's extradition is the result of close coordination among HSI's attaché office in Vienna, Austria; the U.S. Secret Service attaché office in Rome; the U.S. State Department Diplomatic Security Service; the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of International Affairs; Interpol; the Croatian Ministries of Justice and the Interior; and the Croatian State Prosecutor's Office. Originally arrested by Croatian authorities in August 2012 based upon the U.S. charges, a Croatian higher court cleared the way for Litvinenko's extradition last month.

Litvinenko is one of 39 defendants named in an indictment returned by a Las Vegas federal grand jury in January 2012. An additional 16 defendants linked to the scheme are charged in three separate indictments.

An indictment is merely an accusation, a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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“We owe a tremendous debt to the Croatian authorities for the extraordinary assistance they provided in this case,” said HSI Executive Associate Director James Dinkins. “It’s another powerful reminder that we won’t allow our borders to be barriers to bringing international fugitives to justice.”

“This operation demonstrates there is no such thing as anonymity in the cyber world. Our success in this operation and other similar investigations is a result of our close work with our network of law enforcement partners,” said Secret Service Assistant Director Paul Morrissey of the Office of Investigations.

Operation Open Market, which began in March 2007, targeted an organization known as “Carder.su.” The investigation revealed members of the ring, known as “carders,” were involved in large-scale trafficking of compromised credit card account data and counterfeit credit cards, as well as money laundering, narcotics trafficking and various types of computer crime. The organization operated an Internet web portal, called a forum, where members could purchase the illicitly obtained data and share knowledge of various fraud schemes. A second forum was created to vet incoming new members. The forums were generally hosted within the former Soviet Union where the upper echelon members of the organization resided. It was estimated that, in July 2011, there were more than 5,500 members.

Authorities determined members of the organization had different roles, including moderators who directed other members in carrying out activities; reviewers who examined and tested products, services, and contraband; vendors who advertised and sold products, services and contraband; and the members themselves. Members were required to successfully complete a number of security features designed to protect the organization from infiltration by law enforcement or members of rival criminal organizations.

In addition to HSI, the U.S. Secret Service and members of the former SWIFT Task Force, NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Computer Crimes Division, also provided assistance in the investigation.

The law enforcement action is sponsored by President Barack Obama’s Financial Fraud Enforcement Task Force. President Obama established the interagency task force to wage an aggressive, coordinated and proactive effort to investigate and prosecute financial crimes. The task force includes representatives from a broad range of federal agencies, regulatory authorities, inspectors general, and state and local law enforcement who, working together, bring to bear a powerful array of criminal and civil enforcement resources.

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EDITOR’S NOTE: For questions concerning this release, please contact the U.S. Secret Service Office of Government and Public Affairs at 202-406-5708.