

PREET BHARARA
UNITED STATES ATTORNEY FOR THE
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK
BY: ANDREW C. ADAMS
ASSISTANT UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
ONE SAINT ANDREW'S PLAZA
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10007.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

PLAINTIFF,

- AGAINST -

NIKOLAOS PANAGIOTOPOULOS,

Defendant,

ALL RIGHT, TITLE AND INTEREST
IN THE REAL PROPERTY AND
APPURTENANCES KNOWN AS 5
WILDWOOD DR, #13B, TOWN OF
WAPPINGER, NY 12590, PARCEL #
135689-6158-08-909754-0000;

ALL RIGHT, TITLE AND INTEREST
IN THE REAL PROPERTY AND
APPURTENANCES KNOWN AS 5
WILDWOOD DR, #19C, TOWN OF
WAPPINGER, NY 12590, PARCEL #
135689-6158-12-735902-0000;

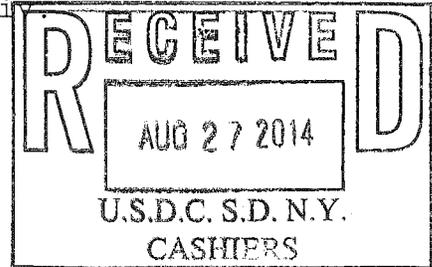
ALL RIGHT, TITLE AND INTEREST
IN THE REAL PROPERTY AND
APPURTENANCES KNOWN AS 28E
ALPINE DRIVE, TOWN OF
WAPPINGER, NY 12590, PARCEL #
135689-6057-16-866327-0000;

ALL RIGHT, TITLE AND INTEREST
IN THE REAL PROPERTY AND
APPURTENANCES KNOWN AS 31D
ALPINE DRIVE, TOWN OF
WAPPINGER, NY 12590, PARCEL #
135689-6057-16-876308-0000;

VERIFIED COMPLAINT

No. 14 Ci

ECF Case



ALL RIGHT, TITLE AND INTEREST
IN THE REAL PROPERTY AND
APPURTENANCES KNOWN AS 27D
ALPINE DRIVE, TOWN OF
WAPPINGER, NY 12590, PARCEL #
135689-6057-16-856338-0000;

ALL RIGHT, TITLE AND INTEREST
IN THE REAL PROPERTY AND
APPURTENANCES KNOWN AS 11I
WHITE GATE ROAD, TOWN OF
WAPPINGER, NY 12590, PARCEL #
135689-6157-16-858451-0000;

AND

ALL RIGHT, TITLE AND INTEREST
IN THE REAL PROPERTY AND
APPURTENANCES KNOWN AS 9C
ALPINE DRIVE, TOWN OF
WAPPINGER, NY 12590, PARCEL #
135689-6057-16-873442-0000

Defendants-in-Rem

Plaintiff the United States of America (the "Government"),
by its attorney Preet Bharara, United States Attorney for the
Southern District of New York, for its verified complaint (the
"Complaint") alleges, upon information and belief, as follows:

INTRODUCTION

1. This action is brought by the Government pursuant to
18 U.S.C. §§ 981(a)(1)(A), 985, and , 1956 seeking the
forfeiture of certain property involved in laundering the

proceeds of a passport and visa fraud scheme, as well as civil money laundering penalties.

2. The Government's claims arise out of the laundering of proceeds obtained through a criminal enterprise based in Greece and engaged in passport and visa fraud, including proceeds in the form of real estate purchases in the Southern District of New York.

3. Since 2013, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Homeland Security Investigations ("HSI"), in coordination with Greek law enforcement authorities, has investigated the human smuggling and visa fraud activities of Greek national Nikolaos Panagiotopoulos. Panagiotopoulos directs a conspiracy which has facilitated the smuggling of foreign nationals into the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, and Canada. Most of the foreign nationals who obtained entry into these countries through the conspiracy were Albanian citizens posing as Greek nationals. In exchange for this illegal service, Panagiotopoulos received payments of approximately € 15,000 per individual traveling to the United States, Australia, or Canada, and approximately € 5,000 per individual traveling to the United Kingdom.

4. Panagiotopoulos has recently been arrested and charged with crimes relating to false applications for passports by Greek authorities. Moreover, criminal history records provided

by Canadian authorities demonstrate that Panagiotopoulos has been involved in similar activity since at least 2003, at which time Panagiotopoulos was convicted of, among other things, human smuggling.

5. As set forth in more detail below, the proceeds of Panagiotopoulos's criminal activity have been laundered through bank accounts and real estate in the United States, including through real estate located in the Southern District of New York.

6. By this Complaint, the Government seeks forfeiture of all right, title and interest in the following property:

(a) The real property and appurtenances known as 5 Wildwood Dr, #13B, Wappinger's Falls, NY 12590;

(b) The real property and appurtenances known as 5 Wildwood Dr, #19C, Wappinger's Falls, NY 12590,

(c) The real property and appurtenances known as 28E Alpine Drive, Wappinger's Falls, NY 12590;

(d) The real property and appurtenances known as 31D Alpine Drive, Wappinger's Falls, NY 12590;

(e) The real property and appurtenances known as 27D Alpine Drive, Wappinger's Falls, NY 12590;

(f) The real property and appurtenances known as 11 White Gate Road, Wappinger Falls, NY 12590; and

(g) The real property and appurtenances

known as 9C Alpine Drive, Wappinger's Falls,
NY 12590,

and all property traceable thereto,

(the "Defendants-in-Rem").

7. The Government also seeks civil money laundering penalties as against the Defendant Nikolaos Panagiotopoulos, in an amount to be determined at trial.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

8. This Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1345 and 1355(a).

9. Venue is proper pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1355(b)(1)(A) because acts and omissions giving rise to the forfeiture took place in the Southern District of New York.

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

10. Nikolaos Panagiotopoulos, a/k/a "Nikolaos Gkarlis," a/k/a "Georgios Vlachos," is a Greek national currently residing in Greece. Since at least in or about 2003, Panagiotopoulos has orchestrated a scheme by which Albania nationals provide fraudulently obtained identification documents to Greek passport authorities in order to obtain Greek passports in the names of third-parties. Once in possession of those fraudulently obtained passports, the passport holder, with the assistance and at the direction of Panagiotopoulos, applies for entry to various countries, including the United States.

11. Upon information and belief, Panagiotopoulos has participated in human smuggling, passport fraud, and visa fraud since at least 2003. In that year, Panagiotopoulos, using the name Georgios Vlachos, was convicted in Ontario of human smuggling and smuggling in violation of Canadian law. In connection with his prosecution on those charges, Panagiotopoulos provided fingerprints to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (the "RCMP Prints").

12. Upon information and belief, Panagiotopoulos's illegal activities have continued through at least May 2014, at which time Greek law enforcement authorities arrested Panagiotopoulos and several co-conspirators on charges relating to a fraudulent passport and visa fraud scheme. Greek authorities have confirmed the methods of Panagiotopoulos and his co-conspirators through the use of duly authorized telephone communication interceptions, bank account records for accounts belonging to Panagiotopoulos, and interviews with individuals for whom passports were fraudulently obtained. Moreover, Greek authorities have matched prints obtained from Panagiotopoulos upon his arrest in 2014 with the RCMP Prints from 2003.

13. Upon information and belief, the conspiracy was structured as follows: Panagiotopoulos and/or his co-conspirators would obtain legitimate identification documents of Greek nationals and then alter the identification documents by

replacing the photographs with the photographs of individuals paying for fraudulent passports. Those individuals (the "Fraudulent Travelers") went to Greek passport offices and used the altered identification documents to apply for authentic Greek passports. Once the fraudulently obtained passports were issued, Panagiotopoulos accompanied the Fraudulent Travelers either to the airport in Greece or, in some instances, to the country of destination.

14. The Fraudulent Travelers made their payments for Panagiotopoulos's services principally in cash or money orders (e.g., Western Union or Money Gram). Panagiotopoulos first would deposit the proceeds of the fraud to bank accounts under his control in Europe. Panagiotopoulos would then launder the money by transferring the proceeds to bank accounts under his control in the United States. Finally Panagiotopoulos would use that money to purchase property in the United States, including real estate located in the Southern District of New York.

15. This money laundering scheme involved extensive use of U.S.-based attorney escrow bank accounts controlled by Panagiotopoulos. Those escrow accounts have received large transfers of money from two Eurobank accounts belonging to Panagiotopoulos. For example, on February 29, 2012, a transfer of \$110,000 was transferred from a bank account held at Eurobank in the name of Panagiotopoulos (account number ending in -2007)

to a bank account held by a New York-based law firm. These funds - as well as funds transferred from other European bank accounts controlled by Panagiotopoulos, including Eurobank account ending in -4449 - were then used to purchase at least seven separate properties in New York from March 2012 through April 2013, the Defendants-in-Rem.

16. Upon information and belief, and according to documents obtained from an individual involved in the closing of the sales relating to each of the Defendants-in-Rem, the Defendants-in-Rem were purchased by the Trustee of the "Nikolaos Pangiotopoulos Living Trust," and, in one case, by NAMV Properties LLC. According to documents relating to the organization of NAMV Properties LLC, that entity wholly-owned by Panagiotopoulos.

17. Upon information and belief, Panagiotopoulos has submitted personal income tax returns to Greek tax authorities that fail to account for any legitimate source of income sufficient to have funded the purchase of the Defendants-in-Rem.

18. [INFO FROM CURRENT PROPERTY MANAGER].

FIRST CLAIM
(FORFEITURE UNDER 18 U.S.C. §§ 981(a)(1)(A), 985)

19. The Government incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 17 above as if fully set forth herein.

20. Pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 981(a)(1)(A), "[a]ny property,

real or personal, involved in a transaction in violation of section 1956 [or] 1957 . . . of [title 18, relating to money laundering offenses], or any property traceable to such property," is subject to forfeiture to the Government.

21. 18 U.S.C. § 1956(a)(1) imposes a criminal penalty on any person who:

knowing that the property involved in a financial transaction involves the proceeds of some form of unlawful activity, conducts or attempts to conduct such a financial transaction which in fact involves the proceeds of specified unlawful activity -

(A) (i) with the intent to promote the carrying on of specified unlawful activity; or

(ii) with intent to engage in conduct constituting a violation of section 7201 or 7206 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986; or

(B) knowing that the transaction is designed in whole or in part -

(i) to conceal or disguise the nature, the location, the source, the ownership, or the control of the proceeds of specified unlawful activity; or

(ii) to avoid a transaction

reporting requirement under State

or Federal law[.]

22. Section 1956(a)(2) further imposes a criminal penalty on any person who:

transports, transmits, or transfers, or attempts to transport, transmit, or transfer a monetary instrument or funds from a place in the United States to or through a place outside the United States or to a place in the United States from or through a place outside the United States -

(A) with the intent to promote the carrying on of specified unlawful activity; or

(B) knowing that the monetary instrument or funds involved in the transportation, transmission, or transfer represent the proceeds of some form of unlawful activity and knowing that such transportation, transmission, or transfer is designed in whole or in part -

(i) to conceal or disguise the nature, the location, the source, the ownership, or the control of the proceeds of specified unlawful activity; or

(ii) to avoid a transaction reporting requirement under State or Federal law[.]

23. 18 U.S.C. § 1957 imposes a criminal penalty on any person who "knowingly engages or attempts to engage in a monetary transaction [in the United States] in criminally derived property of a value greater than \$10,000 and is derived from specified unlawful activity." A "monetary transaction" includes the "deposit, withdrawal, transfer, or exchange, in or affecting interstate or foreign commerce, of funds or a monetary instrument . . . by, through, or to a financial institution."

18 U.S.C. § 1957(f)(1).

24. Pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 1956(h), "[a]ny person who conspires to commit any offense defined in this section or section 1957 shall be subject to the same penalties as those prescribed for the offense the commission of which was the object of the conspiracy."

25. For purposes of Sections 1956 and 1957, "specified unlawful activity" includes, among other things, violations of 18 U.S.C. § 1542, which provides, in relevant part, "[w]hoever willfully and knowingly uses or attempts to use, or furnishes to another for use any passport the issue of which was secured in any way by reason of any false statement [shall be guilty of a crime]."

26. For purposes of Sections 1956 and 1957, "specified unlawful activity" also includes, among other things, violations of 18 U.S.C. § 1546, which provides, in relevant part, "[w]hoever . . . uses, attempts to use, possesses, obtains, accepts, or receives any [immigrant or nonimmigrant visa, permit, border crossing card, alien registration receipt card, or other document prescribed by statute or regulation for entry into or as evidence of authorized stay or employment in the United States] . . . knowing it to have been . . . procured by means of any false claim or statement, or to have been otherwise procured by fraud or unlawfully obtained [shall be guilty of a crime]."

27. The Defendants-in-Rem constitute property involved in money laundering transactions and attempted money laundering transactions in violation of Sections 1956 and 1957 and therefore are subject to forfeiture pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 981(a)(1)(A).

SECOND CLAIM
(CIVIL MONEY LAUNDERING PENALTIES, 18 U.S.C. §§ 1956(a)(1)(A) and (b))

28. The United States incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 17 above as if fully set forth herein.

29. Pursuant to Title 18, United States Code, Section 1956(b), "[w]hoever conducts or attempts to conduct a transaction described in subsection (a)(1) or (a)(3), or section 1957, or a transportation, transmission, or transfer described in subsection (a)(2), is liable to the United States for a civil penalty of not more than the greater of - (A) the value of the property, funds, or monetary instruments involved in the transaction; or (B) \$10,000."

30. Panagiotopoulos engaged in financial transactions involving the proceeds of his passport and visa fraud scheme, and therefore involving specified unlawful activity within the meaning of the money laundering statute.

31. Panagiotopoulos acted with the intent of promoting and perpetuating his criminal enterprise's acts of fraud and money

laundering, and to aid the members of his enterprise in promoting their unlawful activities.

32. Accordingly, Panagiotopoulos is liable to the United States for the value of the funds and monetary instruments involved in the transactions, in an amount of at least \$373,297.93 or an amount to be determined at trial.

THIRD CLAIM
(CIVIL MONEY LAUNDERING PENALTIES, 18 U.S.C. §§ 1956(a)(1)(B) and (b))

33. The United States incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 17 above as if fully set forth herein.

34. Panagiotopoulos engaged in financial transactions involving the proceeds of his passport and visa fraud scheme, and therefore involving specified unlawful activity within the meaning of the money laundering statute.

35. Panagiotopoulos knew that the financial transactions were designed in whole or in part to conceal or disguise the nature, location, source, ownership, or control of the proceeds of his passport and visa fraud scheme.

36. Accordingly, Panagiotopoulos is liable to the United States for the value of the funds and monetary instruments involved in the transactions, in an amount of at least \$373,297.93 or an amount to be determined at trial.

FOURTH CLAIM
(CIVIL MONEY LAUNDERING PENALTIES, 18 U.S.C. §§ 1956(a)(2)(A)
and (b))

37. The United States incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 17 above as if fully set forth herein.

38. Panagiotopoulos transported, transmitted, and transferred monetary instruments and funds from a place in the United States to or through a place outside of the United States, or to a place in the United States from or through a place outside the United States, with the intent to promote his underlying acts of passport and visa fraud, and money laundering, and to aid his criminal enterprise in promoting those unlawful activities.

39. Accordingly, Panagiotopoulos is liable to the United States for the value of the funds and monetary instruments involved in the transactions, in an amount of at least \$373,297.93 or an amount to be determined at trial.

FIFTH CLAIM
(CIVIL MONEY LAUNDERING PENALTIES, 18 U.S.C. §§ 1956(a)(2)(B)
and (b))

40. The United States incorporates by reference 1 through 17 above as if fully set forth herein.

41. Panagiotopoulos transported, transmitted, and transferred monetary instruments and funds from a place in the United States to or through a place outside of the United States, or to a place in the United States from or through a

place outside the United States, to conceal or disguise the nature, location, source, ownership, or control of the proceeds of his passport and visa fraud scheme.

42. Accordingly, Panagiotopoulos is liable to the United States for the value of the funds and monetary instruments involved in the transactions, in an amount of at least \$373,297.93 or an amount to be determined at trial.

SIXTH CLAIM
(CIVIL MONEY LAUNDERING PENALTIES, 18 U.S.C. §§ 1956(b) and 1957)

43. The United States incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 17 above as if fully set forth herein.

44. Panagiotopoulos knowingly engaged in monetary transactions involving funds obtained from his passport and visa fraud scheme, or funds traceable to such funds, and therefore involving criminally derived property which was derived from specified unlawful activity within the meaning of the money laundering statute.

45. Such transactions were made by, through, and to financial institutions and involved property of a value greater than \$10,000.

46. Accordingly, Panagiotopoulos is liable to the United States for the value of the funds and monetary instruments involved in the transactions, in an amount of at least \$373,297.93 or an amount to be determined at trial.

SEVENTH CLAIM

(CIVIL MONEY LAUNDERING PENALTIES, 18 U.S.C. §§ 1956(h) and (b))

47. The United States incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 17 above as if fully set forth herein.

48. From at least in or about 2013, through in or about May 2014, Panagiotopoulos knowingly did combine, conspire, confederate, and agree together and with each other to violate 18 U.S.C. §§ 1956(a)(1)(A), (a)(1)(B), (a)(2)(A), (a)(2)(B), and 1957.

49. It was a part and an object of the conspiracy that Panagiotopoulos engaged in financial transactions that involved the proceeds of his passport and visa fraud scheme in order to promote his criminal enterprise's underlying acts of passport fraud, visa fraud, and money laundering.

50. It was a further part and object of the conspiracy that Panagiotopoulos engaged in financial transactions in whole or in part to conceal or disguise the nature, location, source, ownership, or control of the proceeds of his passport and visa fraud scheme.

51. It was a further part and object of the conspiracy that Panagiotopoulos would transport, transmit, and transfer monetary instruments and funds from a place in the United States to or through a place outside of the United States, or to a place in the United States from or through a place outside the

United States, with the intent to promote his underlying acts of passport fraud, visa fraud, and money laundering.

52. It was a further part and object of the conspiracy that Panagiotopoulos would transport, transmit, and transfer monetary instruments and funds from a place in the United States to or through a place outside of the United States, or to a place in the United States from or through a place outside the United States, to conceal or disguise the nature, location, source, ownership, or control of the proceeds of his passport and visa fraud scheme.

53. It was a further part and object of the conspiracy that Panagiotopoulos engaged or attempted to engage in monetary transactions in criminally derived property of a value greater than \$10,000, and which was derived from his passport and visa fraud scheme.

54. Accordingly, Panagiotopoulos is liable to the United States for the value of the funds and monetary instruments involved in the conspiracy, in an amount to be determined at trial.

REQUEST FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE plaintiff, the United States of America, requests that judgment be entered as follows:

- A. Enter judgment against the Defendants-in-Rem, and in favor of the United States, on the first claim alleged

in the Complaint.

- B. Issue process to enforce the forfeiture of the Defendants-in-Rem, requiring that all persons having an interest in the Defendants-in-Rem be required to appear and show cause why the forfeiture should not be decreed, and that this Court decree forfeiture of the Defendants-in-Rem to the United States of America for disposition according to law;
- C. Enter judgment against Panagiotopoulos, and in favor of the United States, on the second through seventh claims alleged in the Complaint.
- D. Award the United States civil money laundering penalties from Panagiotopoulos on the second through seventh claims alleged in the Complaint, in an amount of at least \$373,297.93 or an amount to be determined at trial, plus prejudgment and postjudgment interest.

E. Grant the Government such further relief as this Court may deem just and proper, together with the costs and disbursements in this action.

Dated: New York, New York
August 21, 2014

PREET BHARARA
United States Attorney
Attorney for the United States of
America



ANDREW C. ADAMS
Assistant United States Attorneys
One Saint Andrew's Plaza
New York, New York 10007

VERIFICATION

STATE OF NEW YORK)
COUNTY OF NEW YORK :
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK)

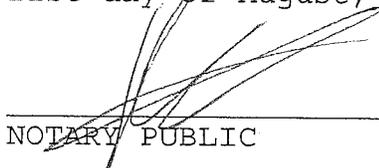
Graham R. Klein, being duly sworn, deposes and says that he is a Special Agent with the Department of Homeland Security, and as such has responsibility for the within action; that he has read the foregoing Verified Complaint and knows the contents thereof, and that the same is true to the best of his knowledge, information, and belief.

The sources of deponent's information and the ground of his belief are official records and files of the United States, information obtained directly by the deponent, and information obtained by other law enforcement officials and representatives during an investigation of alleged violations of Title 18, United States Code.



Graham R. Klein
Special Agent
Department of Homeland Security,
Homeland Security Investigations

Sworn to before me this
21st day of August, 2014:



NOTARY PUBLIC

KEVIN C. GORMAN
Notary Public, State of New York
No. 02GO6161201
Qualified in WESTCHESTER County
Commission Expires FEBRUARY 20, 2015