



HRSP NEWSLETTER

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

November 2017

Naturalized Citizen from Bosnia Sentenced for Fraudulently Obtaining Citizenship

On November 14, 2017, Alexander Kneginich, of Crown Point, Indiana, was sentenced to 12 months in federal prison by Judge Janet T. Neff of U.S. District Court in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Kneginich pled guilty in August 2017 to having fraudulently obtained his U.S. citizenship by falsely denying, during the immigration and naturalization process, that he had ever been charged with or jailed for a crime, when in fact he had been charged with the 1994 murders of two civilians – a husband and wife – during the Bosnian conflict. Kneginich was facing re-trial on those pending murder charges at the time he left Bosnia. Additionally, Kneginich failed to disclose, as required, his foreign military service in the Serb Territorial Defense (TO) in Prijedor, Bosnia in 1992, during a time of considerable ethnic cleansing, as well as his service in the Army of the Serbian Republic of Bosnia (VRS) in 1994. Kneginich told these lies to U.S. immigration authorities on three different occasions: (1) in the course of obtaining authority to enter the United States as a refugee, (2) subsequently obtaining permanent resident status, and (3) ultimately obtaining U.S. citizenship in January 2007 in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The sentence prescribed by the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, based on Kneginich's conviction, was 0-6 months. However, the Court doubled the recommended sentence to 12 months, and in doing so recognized that this case was outside the heartland of naturalization fraud cases and presented aggravating factors. The Court further noted that Kneginich's criminal history score was not accurately represented by the Guidelines, given his flight from murder charges in Bosnia. At the sentencing hearing, the Court also revoked Kneginich's U.S. citizenship, which is mandated by Federal law following his conviction.

In addition to the revocation of Kneginich's citizenship, he faces eventual deportation and/or extradition back to Bosnia and Herzegovina, where murder charges remain pending. In 2009, Bosnia and Herzegovina tried and convicted two other men involved in the 1994 murder of the civilian couple, and they were both sentenced to ten years imprisonment. Bosnian prosecutors are actively seeking Kneginich's extradition for trial.

The case was jointly prosecuted by Trial Attorney Jamie Perry, of the Justice Department's Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section (HRSP), and Assistant U.S. Attorney Hagen W. Frank of the U.S. Attorney's Office, Western District of Michigan. The case was investigated by HSI's Grand Rapids Office, assisted by the Justice Department's Office of International Affairs and the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

People with information about former human rights violators in the United States are urged to contact U.S. law enforcement: Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section at 1-800-813- 5863; Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 1-800-347-2423 or online tip form at <http://www.ice.gov/exec/forms/hsi-tips/tips.asp>); and FBI's International Human Rights Unit tips form at <https://tips.fbi.gov>.

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