

Judge lets Russian man charged with hacking fire his lawyers

May 13 2015, by Martha Bellisle

A Russian man who prosecutors say made millions as a prolific computer hacker and credit card thief was allowed to fire his lawyers on Wednesday, just minutes before the start of a two-day hearing to decide whether his arrest in the Maldives was legal.

Five U.S. agents who were slated to testify about the 2014 arrest waited outside a closed courtroom while Roman Seleznev made his case to U.S. District Judge Richard Jones for dismissing his two federal public defenders, who had been appointed in January after he fired his two private attorneys for unknown reasons.

Jones called everyone back in and announced that new lawyers will be appointed and the arrest hearing canceled. No reason was given for Seleznev's request, which was filed under seal.

In April, Seleznev's lawyers had filed a motion to dismiss the 40-count indictment charging him with hacking, identity theft and wire fraud.

They argued that Seleznev, the son of a member of the Russian Parliament, was on vacation with his girlfriend in the Maldives when two U.S. agents stopped them at the airport as they prepared to board a flight to Moscow. They said the agents took him to a small room, showed him a 2011 federal indictment and put him in handcuffs. They flew him by private jet to Guam where he went before a U.S. federal judge before being flown to Seattle.

The agents failed to secure approval for the capture from any Maldivian judicial authority, according to the motion, and instead "simply disregarded the Maldives' sovereign rights and concocted a scheme to kidnap Mr. Seleznev using means outside the Maldivian legal system." They said the arrest amounted to an illegal rendition and the charges against him dismissed.

The U.S. attorney's office responded by saying the agents acted appropriately and within the law.

Two [agents](#) from the U.S. State Department and two with the U.S. Secret Service who were involved in Seleznev's capture had flown from as far away as Sri Lanka to testify about the [arrest](#), but will need to return when a new hearing date is set.

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