



Department of Justice

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STATE DEPARTMENT CONSULAR EMPLOYEE SENTENCED **TO TWO YEARS IMPRISONMENT FOR VISA FRAUD**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Alexander J. Meerovich, a former State Department consular officer, was sentenced today before U.S. District Court Judge Ricardo M. Urbina to two years imprisonment on visa fraud, the Justice Department announced. The defendant will also serve a two year term of supervised release following his prison sentence and was ordered to pay a \$5,000 fine.

The defendant pleaded guilty on Feb. 6, 2003 to one count of visa fraud. From August 1999 until July 2002, Meerovich was the Deputy Consul General at the U.S. Embassy in Prague, Czech Republic. His duties included interviewing applicants for U.S. visas, reviewing the applications and approving non-immigrant visas for applicants.

In January 2000, Meerovich met with a Ukrainian man who offered to pay him bribes in exchange for fraudulently obtaining U.S. visas for Ukrainian, Slovak, Czech and other individuals. Beginning in April 2000 and continuing until May 2001, Meerovich was paid a bribe for each visa application he fraudulently obtained for the broker. In exchange, the defendant circumvented the normal process for issuing visas.

In May 2001, Meerovich was reprimanded by his supervisor for approving visas for six individuals who were identified as being refused for visas on prior occasions under suspicion of fraud. Meerovich and the visa broker refined their scheme to avoid future detection.

From January 2001 until May 2002, the broker provided Meerovich with visa applications from persons who had falsely assumed identities from stolen or fraudulently obtained Czech passports. Under the revised scheme, Meerovich received from the broker approximately five visa applications a month and \$500 for each application.

According to plea documents, between April 2000 and May 2002, Meerovich arranged for the fraudulent processing of at least 85 visa applications and received cash payments from the visa broker for each of these applications.

Prior to sentencing, Meerovich was assisting law enforcement in locating visa recipients who may be illegally residing in the United States.

This case was prosecuted by trial attorneys Scott D. Dahl and Matthew C. Solomon of the U.S. Department of Justice's Public Integrity Section, headed by Noel L. Hillman, Section Chief, and was investigated by the U.S. Department of State, Diplomatic Security Service.