



Federal Bureau of Investigation

San Diego Division

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Internet Dating Scam Dismantled

San Diego, California - John R. Kingston, Acting Special Agent in Charge, San Diego Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, today announces the arrests of two individuals on charges of Conspiracy and Wire Fraud.

Robert L. McCoy, born January 8, 1964, and his wife, Anna V. Grountovaia, born October 12, 1971, were arrested at 6:00 a.m. on Tuesday, May 13, 2003, without incident at their home in Rancho Cucamonga, California. Their arrest was pursuant to an indictment filed by a Federal Grand Jury for operating a fraudulent Russian dating scheme via the Internet.

The arrests marked the culmination of an investigation conducted by the FBI, in coordination with the U. S. Postal Inspection Service, the U. S. Secret Service, the Internet Fraud Complaint Center, the National White Collar Crime Center, the Federal Trade Commission, and the Department of Justice.

Initiated in January of 2002 by the FBI's Cyber Crime Squad in San Diego, the investigation began after an individual reported he had been defrauded over the Internet. The victim informed the FBI that he had been induced to wire thousands of dollars to an agency which offered to expedite the travel of a Russian woman he had developed a relationship with over the Internet.

The indictment alleges that McCoy and Grountavaia posed as Russian women under various names and posted on-line ads seeking a serious relationship with men. At times, McCoy and Grountavaia would also respond to on-line ads of other men in order to induce them into developing on-line relationships. After the initial contact was established, McCoy and Grountavaia would then send e-mails and contact the victims by telephone to entice the victims into wiring monies to Russia.

In these communications, the indictment alleges that McCoy and Grountavaia, posing as a Russian woman, would claim to belong to an 'agency' that could help facilitate a visit to the victim's home country. Under the guise of this Russian agency, the indictment further alleges that McCoy and Grountavaia sent additional e-mails to the victims, instructing them to wire sums ranging from \$1,790 to \$1,850, so the agency could process flight arrangements, obtain visas, and secure placements for the Russian woman in student exchange programs. After the victims wired the money, believing the Russian woman would soon arrive, McCoy and Grountavaia would then cease all contact with the victims.

After processing at the FBI Building in San Diego, California, both McCoy and Grountavaia were arraigned before United States Magistrate Judge Louisa S. Porter on Tuesday, May 13, 2003. The case has been assigned to United States District Court Judge John S. Rhodes for trial.

If convicted, McCoy and Grountavaia face a maximum penalty of five years incarceration and a \$250,000 fine on charges of Conspiracy to Commit Wire Fraud and twenty years incarceration and another \$250,000 fine on the charges of Wire Fraud.

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