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**PRESS RELEASE**

# Associate of Sanctioned Oligarch Indicted for Sanctions Evasion and Money Laundering

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Tuesday, February 7, 2023

**For Immediate Release**

Office of Public Affairs

## **Fugitive Vladimir Voronchenko Aided in Concealing Luxury Real Estate Owned by Viktor Vekselberg**

A federal court in New York unsealed an indictment today charging a citizen of the Russian Federation and legal permanent resident of the United States with participating in a scheme to make over \$4 million in U.S. dollar payments to maintain four real properties in the United States that were owned by Viktor Vekselberg, a sanctioned oligarch, as well as to attempt to sell two of those properties.

According to court documents, Vladimir Voronchenko, aka Vladimir Vorontchenko, 70, of Moscow, Russia; New York, New York; Southampton, New York; and Fisher Island, Florida, is additionally charged with contempt of court in connection with his flight from the United States following receipt of a grand jury subpoena requiring his personal appearance and testimony.

According to allegations in the indictment, Voronchenko, who resided at various times in New York, Florida, and Russia, held himself out as a successful businessman, art collector, and art dealer, and as a close friend and business associate of Vekselberg.

On April 6, 2018, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated Viktor Vekselberg as a Specially Designated National (SDN) in connection with its finding that the actions of the Government of the Russian Federation in Ukraine constituted an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. On or about March 11, 2022, OFAC redesignated Vekselberg as an SDN and blocked Vekselberg's yacht and private airplane.

Prior to his designation by OFAC, between in or about 2008 and in or about 2017, Vekselberg, through a series of shell companies, acquired real properties in the United States, specifically, (a) an apartment on Park Avenue in New York, New York, (b) an estate in Southampton, New York, (c) an apartment on Fisher Island, Florida, and (d) a penthouse apartment also on Fisher Island, Florida (collectively, the Properties). As of the date of the indictment, the Properties were worth approximately \$75 million.

Voronchenko retained an attorney (the Attorney), who practiced in New York, New York, in connection with the acquisition of the Properties. The Attorney also managed the finances of the Properties, including by paying common charges, property taxes, insurance premiums, and other fees associated with the Properties in U.S. dollar transactions from the Attorney's interest on lawyer's trust account (IOLTA account).

Prior to Vekselberg's designation as an SDN, between approximately February 2009 and March 2018, shell companies owned by Vekselberg sent approximately 90 wire transfers totaling approximately \$18.5 million to the IOLTA account. At the direction of Voronchenko and his family member who lived in Russia, the Attorney used these funds to make various U.S. dollar payments to maintain and service the Properties.

Immediately after Vekselberg's designation as an SDN, the source of the funds used to maintain and service the Properties changed. The IOLTA Account began to receive wires from a bank account in the Bahamas held in the name of a shell company controlled by Voronchenko, "Smile Holding Ltd.," and from a Russian bank account held in the name of a Russian national who was related to Voronchenko. Between approximately June 2018 and March 2022, approximately 25 wire transfers totaling approximately \$4 million were sent to the IOLTA account. Although the source of the payments changed, the management of the payments remained the same as before: Voronchenko and his family member directed the Attorney to use these funds to make various U.S. dollar payments to maintain and service the Properties. Additionally, after Vekselberg was sanctioned in 2018, Voronchenko and others tried to sell both the Park Avenue apartment and Southampton estate. No licenses from OFAC were applied for or issued for these payments or attempted transfers.

On or about May 13, 2022, federal agents served Voronchenko on Fisher Island with a Grand Jury subpoena, which called for his personal appearance for testimony and his production of documents. Approximately nine days later, on or about May 22, 2022, Voronchenko took a flight

from Miami, Florida to Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and then went to Moscow, Russia. Voronchenko failed to appear before the grand jury and has not returned to the United States.

Voronchenko charged with conspiring to violate and evade U.S. sanctions, in violation of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA); violating IEEPA; conspiring to commit international money laundering; and international money laundering, each of which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison. Voronchenko was also charge with contempt of court, which carries a maximum sentence within the discretion of the court. The indictment also provides notice of the United States' intention to forfeit from Voronchenko the proceeds of his offenses, including the Properties.

U.S. Attorney Damian Williams for the Southern District of New York, Task Force KleptoCapture Director Andrew C. Adams, Special Agent in Charge Ivan J. Arvelo of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) New York Field Office, and Acting Special Agent in Charge Maged Behnam of the FBI Miami Field Office made the announcement.

The FBI and HSI are investigating the case with valuable assistance provided by the Justice Department's National Security Division and Office of International Affairs, and OFAC.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jessica Greenwood, Joshua A. Naftalis, and Sheb Swett for the Southern District of New York are prosecuting the case.

This case was coordinated through the Justice Department's Task Force KleptoCapture, an interagency law enforcement task force dedicated to enforcing the sweeping sanctions, export controls and economic countermeasures that the United States, along with its foreign allies and partners, has imposed in response to Russia's unprovoked military invasion of Ukraine. Announced by the Attorney General on March 2, 2022 and under the leadership of the Office of the Deputy Attorney General, the task force will continue to leverage all of the department's tools and authorities to combat efforts to evade or undermine the collective actions taken by the U.S. government in response to Russian military aggression.

*An indictment is merely an allegation. All defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.*

*Updated February 7, 2023*

## Topics

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ASSET FORFEITURE

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