

DOJ Announces Sentencing in Scheme to Defraud Trademark Registration Owners

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As is well known, trademark filings are public knowledge. This access to public information has not been lost on those who like to prey on those who may be unfamiliar with trademark prosecution and the process behind gaining a mark. For years irreputable companies, normally located overseas, have contacted owners of trademark applications and registrations with seeming official communication implying additional fees are required to maintain their mark or add their mark to a "list" or similar register. The DOJ struck back sending a clear message this type of scheme will no longer be tolerated. Score one for the good guy!

In an important defense of the U.S. trademark system, the U.S. Department of Justice recently announced the sentencing of Viktors Suhorukovs, who pleaded guilty to mail fraud in a scheme that victimized owners of U.S. trademark registrations.

Suhorukovs, a citizen of Latvia, was sentenced to four years in federal prison and ordered to pay \$4.5 million in restitution. In his multi-million-dollar scam, he created entities called Patent and Trademark Office, LLC and Patent and Trademark Bureau, LLC, and used them to defraud more than 2,900 U.S. trademark registrants out of millions of dollars of inflated or phony renewal fees. His was one of many similar schemes that use correspondence that appears to come from the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) to get victims to pay for services they don't need.

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