

Russian Immigrant Convicted in Fatal Plot

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NEW YORK — A Russian immigrant convicted of stealing the identities of three missing people, including a Ukrainian-born translator and a man whose body parts turned up in a New Jersey wilderness area, was sentenced to 30 years in prison.

Dmitriy Yakovlev, 43, was never charged with murder. But a jury found him guilty in March of fraud charges alleging that he had killed the translator and another one of his victims before raiding their bank accounts and credit lines — a theft totaling more than \$83,000.

The government portrayed Yakovlev as a heartless predator who purposely preyed on people who lived alone or were reclusive, hoping that their disappearances would be overlooked.

"The conduct here ... is extraordinary. It shocks the conscience," prosecutor James Gatta said, while asking for a life sentence.

Judge Leo Glasser settled on the lesser term Thursday after telling the defense that giving Yakovlev no more than nine years as it wanted "would be an affront to common sense."

Yakovlev, who earned a degree in surgery in Russia, declined to speak at the sentencing in federal court in Brooklyn. He showed no emotion when his punishment was announced.

At trial, jurors heard how Yakovlev had met the 47-year-old translator, Irina Malezhik, by chance at a law office in 2004.

Three years later, a security camera captured Malezhik leaving her modest apartment in Brighton Beach for the last time. Prosecutors alleged that only a few minutes earlier, she had received a phone call from Yakovlev.

The following day, Yakovlev's wife, Julia Yakovlev, purchased two Franck Muller watches for \$16,200 using the victim's Social Security card as identification, prosecutors said. The couple was later videotaped using the victim's credit card at a department store on Long Island.

Malezhik was never seen again, though a search of the Yakovlevs' home in Brooklyn turned up a pair of her underwear in the basement.

Prosecutors also alleged that Dmitriy Yakovlev killed and dismembered one of his neighbors, Viktor Alekseyev, whose remains were found in plastic garbage bags in South Mountain Reservation in 2005 after he disappeared on the eve of a trip to Moscow.

"The way in which Alekseyev's body parts were disarticulated indicated that an individual with anatomical knowledge and training such as Yakovlev — a surgeon — was the person who did it," the government said in recently filed court papers.

The defendant also was convicted of stealing the identity of a third acquaintance, a retired New York Police Department employee who disappeared without a trace in 2003.

According to the FBI, Yakovlev admitted making ATM withdrawals and purchases with the missing victims' credit cards. But he claimed that he had permission as repayment for loans.

His wife avoided trial by pleading guilty to identity theft and credit card fraud. She was sentenced to three years.

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