

## U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

### News Releases

July 29, 2010 

### **9 sentenced in Ohio marriage fraud scheme**

COLUMBUS, Ohio - Nine people pleaded guilty to charges connected with their involvement in a scheme in central Ohio to arrange marriages between foreign nationals and U.S. citizens. The sentences were announced by the U.S. Attorney's Office and U.S. Immigration Customs and Enforcement (ICE).

Brian Moskowitz, ICE special agent in charge of the Office of Homeland Security Investigations in Ohio and Michigan, along with Carter M. Stewart, U. S. Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio, announced the sentences by U.S. District Judge Algenon L. Marbley.

The sentences were imposed on the following individuals:

- Hasan Salohutdinov of Dublin, Ohio, and an illegal alien from Uzbekistan, was sentenced to 15 months imprisonment followed by deportation. He pleaded guilty on April 5, 2010, to one count of conspiracy to commit marriage fraud and on count of presenting false statements to U.S. immigration authorities. Salohutdinov introduced other Uzbeks into the scheme in order that they might pay to engage in sham marriages.
- Dmitry Pani also of Dublin, and an illegal alien from Estonia, was sentenced to one year imprisonment. Pani also pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit marriage fraud.
- Sviatlana A. Piskunova of Columbus pleaded guilty to conspiracy and sentenced to time served.
- Laura Elizabeth Grace Scott of Columbus pleaded guilty to conspiracy and was sentenced to two years probation which includes six months of home confinement.
- Courtnie Susann Good of Columbus pleaded guilty to marriage fraud and was sentenced to two years probation which includes six months of home confinement with electronic monitoring.
- Elbek A. Saidjanov of Philadelphia, Penn., pleaded guilty to marriage fraud and was sentenced to time served, about seven and one-half months.
- Iskander Odilovich Tairov, of Galloway, Ohio, pleaded guilty to marriage fraud and was sentenced to two years probation.
- Brent James Woods of Columbus pleaded guilty to marriage fraud and was sentenced to four years

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probation including four months in Alvis House.

- Djafar B. Sobirov of Columbus pleaded guilty to marriage fraud and was sentenced to two years probation.

Pani established an informal "business" to find U.S. citizens who would accept money to enter into sham marriages with aliens for the purpose of evading a provision of the immigration laws of the United States, and to aid and abet in the making of false statements to immigration authorities with respect to those sham marriages in an effort to convince the immigration authorities that they were genuine marriages.

Salohutdinov, who had entered into a sham marriage in Illinois, moved to Ohio and came to know Pani. Salohutdinov and Piskunova joined the conspiracy with Pani and arranged sham marriages for certain other aliens that Salohudinov knew of.

The sham marriages typically occurred shortly after the alien and the U.S. citizen met each other, sometimes even the same day. Saidjanov, an alien, came to Columbus from Philadelphia, Penn., and paid Pani to arrange a sham marriage on Feb. 9, 2009, with Good. Saidjanov also paid his girlfriend, who is an alien, too, to enter into a sham marriage on the following day. These sham marriages took place at The Columbus Wedding Chapel, in Columbus. After the marriages, Sadijanov and his girlfriend returned to Philadelphia, and did not live with their new American spouses.

"Today's sentences are a reminder that America's legal immigration system is not for sale," said Moskowitz. "ICE will aggressively investigate and bring to justice those who seek to compromise the integrity of that system for personal profit or to avoid immigration laws."

Stewart commended the investigation conducted by ICE agents, and the assistance of the ICE Office of Enforcement and Removal, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and the Columbus Police Department, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Dan Brown, who prosecuted the case.

-- ICE --

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.

ICE is a 21<sup>st</sup> century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities. For more information, visit [www.ICE.gov](http://www.ICE.gov). To report suspicious activity, call 1-866-347-2423.

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