

Russian Accused by U.S. of Spy Ring Role Pleads Not Guilty

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NEW YORK — A Russian citizen who U.S. authorities accuse of posing as a banker while participating in a spy ring operating in New York City pleaded not guilty on Wednesday.

Yevgeny Buryakov's plea was entered on his behalf by defense lawyer Benjamin Naftalis at a hearing in Manhattan federal court two days after the Russian was indicted on charges that he engaged in a conspiracy and acted as an unregistered agent of Russia.

Buryakov, who appeared in court in blue jail garb, was arrested in January as the U.S. Justice Department unveiled an initial set of charges against him and two other Russians, Igor Sporyshev and Viktor Podobny.

Prosecutors have said the trio conspired to gather economic intelligence on behalf of Russia, including information about U.S. sanctions against the country, and to recruit New York City residents as intelligence sources.

The case has prompted demands for Buryakov's release by Russia's Foreign Ministry, which

says the United States had not provided evidence to support the allegations.

Prosecutors said Buryakov engaged in covert work on behalf of Russia's foreign intelligence service, known as the SVR, while posing as a banker. Russia's Vnesheconombank continues to list on its website Buryakov as a deputy representative for its New York office.

Federal prosecutors said Sporyshev worked as a Russian trade representative from November 2010 to November 2014, while Podobny was an attache to Russia's mission to the United Nations from December 2012 to September 2013.

Prosecutors said Buryakov met with Sporyshev on four dozen occasions from March 2012 to September 2014 to exchange information related to their work as intelligence agents for SVR.

Buryakov also traveled to another country in November 2012 and March 2013 to collect economic intelligence for SVR, prosecutors said.

Sporyshev and Podobny have not been arrested and no longer live in the United States but had diplomatic immunity while they were in the country, prosecutors said.

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