

Bulgarians Accused of Spying for Russia to Face Trial in London Court

By [Pippa Crawford](#)

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Old Bailey court, London. [It's No Game / flickr](#)

LONDON — Five Bulgarian nationals accused of working as part of a Russian spy ring in the U.K. will go on trial next year, a judge at the Old Bailey court ruled Friday.

Vanya Gaberova, 29, Orlin Roussev, 45, Bizer Dzhambazov, 41, Katrin Ivanova, 32, and Ivan Stoyanov, 31, are charged with conspiracy to collect information that may be useful to a foreign power between Aug. 30, 2020, and Feb. 8, 2023.

The defendants appeared by video link from prison.

Dzhambazov and Ivanova, a couple living at the same North London address, and Roussev, arrested in a three-star hotel in the seaside town of Great Yarmouth, face the additional charge of possessing false identity documents.

The trio allegedly impersonated journalists with the intent to survey targets in the U.K.,

Germany, and Montenegro. Scotland Yard found forged press cards and branded clothing for National Geographic and the Discovery Channel in their possession.

The alleged spy ring has been linked to Jan Marselek, the Austrian executive of disgraced payment processing firm Wirecard.

Marselek, a suspect in a major fraud case who is thought to have fled to Russia in 2020 after Interpol issued a Red Notice for his arrest, is suspected of “tasking” the five defendants but has not been charged in this case.

At a previous hearing, devices seized from the defendants were said to contain 80,000 messages, which the prosecution was examining “forensically.”

A lawyer for Roussev argued that the longer trial window was likely in light of new evidence, which consisted of further messages relating to the alleged conspiracy on the seized devices.

The 3,000 new messages, which Roussev’s lawyer referred to as “the Montenegro Files,” consist of a discussion between Roussev and one other defendant over their activities in Montenegro.

The attorney added that Roussev, a technician with a reported history of business dealings with Russia, will need to be cross-examined over his potential relationship to the “Montenegro Files.”

Roussev is currently in HMP Belmarsh, a Category A prison, and has yet to be granted access to a laptop to review the evidence against him.

Judge Jeremy Baker remanded all five in custody until March, and set a trial date for Oct. 28, 2024. It is expected to last four months.

Prosecutor Amelia Morgan pushed for an earlier trial date. She disclosed that future proceedings will involve “international inquiries, witness statements from targets of the operation in other countries, and harm statements from the highest levels of governments.”

The alleged spies led unassuming lives before their arrests in February. Gaberova was a high-street beautician who judged several eyelash competitions. Stoyanov was an amateur mixed martial arts fighter who competed in the U.K. under the name “the Destroyer.”

Hospital driver Dzhambazov and lab assistant Ivanova moved to the U.K. 10 years ago and were said to have been respected by their neighbors. The pair ran a community organization for Bulgarians which included classes on the “culture and norms of British society.”

At the site of Roussev’s arrest in Great Yarmouth, a bartender [told](#) The Independent: “It’s either nothing happens or everything happens ... It’s a seaside town, it’s kind of part and parcel, unfortunately.”

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