

FBI SEEMS TO BE COLLECTING OFFERS TO SPY FOR RUSSIA

In late August, alleged aspiring spy Jareh Dalke told someone he believed to be a Russian spy that he had already reached out on the “SVR [Russia’s foreign intelligence service] TOR site.”

In addition, in two emails on or about August 23 and 24, 2022, DALKE requested that the OCE take steps to verify that the person DALKE was communicating with was truly a member of Foreign Government-1. DALKE claimed that he had reached out through “multiple published channels to gain a response. This included submission to the SVR TOR site.”³ DALKE sought assurances that the OCE truly was a “[Foreign Government-1] entity rather than americans [sic] trying to stifle a patriot.” DALKE requested that the OCE provide verification of the association with Foreign Government-1, through a posting on an official website or through a report in one of the “media services associated with the government.”

That may provide useful insight into why Dalke was arrested on the same day as Anna Gabrielian and her spouse, Jamie Lee Henry, also for attempting to spy for Russia. Gabrielian told the undercover officer she wanted to support Russia, including its war in Ukraine.

During that meeting, GABRIELIAN told the UC she was motivated by patriotism toward Russia to provide any assistance she could to Russia, even if it meant being fired or going to jail.

Like Dalke, Gabrielian allegedly reached out to

Russia at some unspecified time in the preceding months. Like Dalke, an undercover FBI officer had followed up on that outreach and gotten the aspiring spies to reconfirm an interest in working with Russia (they're not the same undercover employee, though; one is referred to with female pronouns and the other is referred to with male pronouns).

On or about August 17, 2022, an FBI Undercover Agent ("UC") approached GABRIELIAN and introduced herself by name. The UC told GABRIELIAN she was asked to contact GABRIELIAN about the assistance she offered a couple of months ago. GABRIELIAN asked if the UC was from the Russian Embassy, and the UC confirmed that she was.

The entirety of the case against Gabrielian and Henry was put together during a few weeks in August, during a period between the time when Dalke first shared fragments of three documents in early August and a period in early September when Dalke's undercover officer was trying (unsuccessfully) to lure him to DC. It appears to have sat, largely wrapped up, until former Mueller prosecutor Aaron Zelinsky presented it to a grand jury on Tuesday.

Ultimately, the FBI set up an electronic dead drop for Dalke at Denver's Union Station for a four hour window on Wednesday.

In Gabrielian and Henry's case, the couple only provided medical records from Fort Bragg and Johns Hopkins (though each HIPAA violation carries a potential ten year sentence). Dalke is accused of sharing Top Secret NSA information and documents from two other agencies.

And his case is far more alarming for the way that he seems to have gotten hired at the NSA with the intent of stealing documents he could use to pay off his debt.

He was in the Army from 2015 to 2018. The next year, he got an online Bachelors in

cybersecurity, and what is probably another online degree, a Masters, sometime after that. He bought a place with his partner in Colorado Springs in 2020. In June, he took a job at the NSA, but only remained there for 25 days, from June 6 until July 1. He claimed he left because of a family illness that would require nine months away, but then he applied for a new NSA job on August 11, after setting up the cryptocurrency account he would use to get paid by the presumed Russian spy.

The affidavit describes two reasons, besides debt, why Dalke might have considered spying. His arrest affidavit describes him expressing dissatisfaction with the US, particularly how it treated members of the military. "This country it is not as great as it thinks it once was. It is all about the businesses and their money, not anything about the people or those that serve it to include the military." And he, "recently learned that my heritage ties back to your country, which is part of why I have come to you as opposed to others."

But in 2017, he filed for bankruptcy, reporting over \$80,000 of debt. And in a conversation with the presumed spy, he described even more extensive debts than reflected in his bankruptcy filings (though that may reflect the mortgage on his home).

In addition, according to court filings, on December 12, 2017, DALKE filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy, which was granted on March 29, 2018. At that time, DALKE reported that he had approximately \$32,809.52 in student loan debt and \$50,987.34 in other non-secured debt, primarily credit card debt. At the time of the bankruptcy filing, DALKE also reported that he had approximately \$8,373.12 in total assets.

[snip]

DALKE further noted that he was in financial need and was seeking

compensation via a specific type of cryptocurrency in return for providing information he had procured, stating, “[t]here is an opportunity to help balance scales of the world while also tending to my own needs.” DALKE requested payment in the specific type of cryptocurrency because “as in these things privacy is extremely important.”

[snip]

On or about August 26, 2022, DALKE told the OCE that the total amount of his debt was \$237,000, \$93,000 of which was “coming due very soon.”

So, with his two online degrees, he started a job at the NSA on June 6. He either came in knowing – or soon learned – of a vulnerability that he used to access stuff for which he wasn’t cleared.

DALKE also noted that certain of the information he had access to was due to a misconfiguration in the system that granted him access to information beyond what he should otherwise have.

On June 17, June 22, and June 23 he printed out some of the documents he is accused of stealing. On June 28, he told the NSA he was leaving for a family illness, and left three days later. And then, after he had sent four documents to the guy pretending to be a Russian spy, Dalke applied for an external vacancy at the NSA, 8 months before he planned to return to the agency. (Update: The affidavit is not entirely clear whether Dalke would have taken a job earlier.)

In short, this was a guy who appears to have treated NSA like a quick fix for his debt woes. And at a time of heightened intelligence concerns and in the wake of Edward Snowden and Josh Schulte, he still wasn’t IDed during the vetting process.