



Taichung District Prosecutors Office

Press Release

Releasing date : June 3rd, 2020

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92 Indicted in Montenegro Cross-Border Fraud Case

The prosecutor of the Taichung District Prosecutors Office(TDPO) actively tracked cross-border fraud scam with the National Anti-Telecom Fraud Database. By means of mutual legal assistance, diplomacy and international police cooperation, joint task force of Montenegro and Taiwan cracked down on fraud call centers run by Wang(王○○), Wu(吳○○) and other 90 conspirators in Podgorica, capital of Montenegro. Montenegro and Taiwan completed the first transfer-of-proceedings case, therefore, the 92 defendants were repatriated and the evidences were transferred to Taiwan. The defendants are charged with fraud, organized crimes and human trafficking.

According to the evidence, the prosecutors found the fraud syndicate set up telecom fraud call centers in France and Montenegro, all of which targeted the victims in Mainland China. The gang impersonated officials of mainland Communications Management Bureau, Ministry of Public Security, and Prosecutors Office to claim the victims involved in crimes of applying for phone numbers with fake IDs and required them to transfer money to notarized mule accounts. The gang defrauded 2020 victims of NT\$ 623,878,500 from September 2019 to January 8, 2020, which hardly devastated Taiwan's reputation.

The TDPO anti-telecom-fraud division initiated the investigation, led by prosecutor Shi-jia Chang(張時嘉), after screening out several high-risk suspects engaging in cross-border telecom fraud by big data analysis in July, 2019. After directing International Criminal Affairs Division of the Criminal Investigation Bureau(ICAD) to track the suspects' whereabouts and receiving intelligence from the Taiwan High Procurators Office(THPO) in September, 2019, prosecutor Shi-jia Chang(張時嘉) found some members of the huge fraud syndicate had entered Montenegro to set up call centers in October,

2019, then submitted mutual legal assistance to Montenegro and commanded ICAD to seek cooperation with Montenegro police. The Montenegrin Ministry of Justice replied positively and the prosecutor of the Montenegrin Special State Prosecutor's Office(SSPO) placed a case on file for investigation of the gang. Prosecutor Shi-jia Chang(張時嘉) assigned ICAD Chief, Yanmin Gan(甘炎民), to head a team to Montenegro. On January 8, 2020, Montenegro and Taiwan police conducted raids on three call centers in Podgorica, arrested 92 members of the scam syndicate led by Wang and Wu and seized related criminal evidences. Wang and other 7 people were detained by Montenegrin court's ruling for violations of organized crimes and human trafficking.

To deal with the large number of defendants and the complexity of the case, the Chief Prosecutor of TDPO assigned prosecutor Peiqi Zheng(鄭珮琪) and Yuwen Huang(黃鈺雯) collaborating to investigate, and then on January 15,2020, submitted mutual legal assistance to Montenegro, requesting the transfer of proceedings(transferring the accused, criminal evidences and seized items from SSPO to TDPO). SSPO agreed to transfer the proceedings on January 22, 2020. Then, the TDPO Chief Prosecutor signed a letter to take over the case and appointed Head Prosecutor Chingsen Hsu (許景森) to lead a team consisting of prosecutor Shijia Zhang(張時嘉) and prosecutor Mingyi Lin(林明誼), representative of Department of International and Cross-Strait Legal Affairs of the Ministry of Justice, to negotiate the repatriation of the defendants and the transfer of proceedings in Montenegro from February 1 to 6, 2020. With the assistance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and ICAD, Montenegro and Taiwan reached consensus on the transfer and exchanged documents with each other to complete the first transfer-of-proceedings case between Taiwan and European countries, which set a record of international judicial cooperation.

Owing to pandemic of COVID-19, the TDPO task force, when no one was diagnosed positive in Montenegro, commanded ICAD, with the assistance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to implement strict anti-epidemic measures in the repatriation of the 92 defendants in 5 batches back to Taiwan before March 15, 2020. Many TDPO prosecutors assisted in the case. Except two defendants on bail, the other 90 defendants were detained by the ruling of Taichung District Court . The defendants and the police followed the anti-epidemic guidance and none of them reported positive. The TDPO task force had indicted the 92 defendants based on some defendants' confessions and evidences retrieved from Montenegro and Taiwan.

In view of the past cross-border fraud cases, many of which were first cracked by foreign countries, Taiwan, later, began to investigate and often lost the preemptive opportunities, resulting in difficulties of repatriating defendants and obtaining evidences. So in this case, TDPO tried to take the initiative, with big data analysis, to grasp the dynamics of fraud group members in advance and cooperate with countries where call centers established to crack down on criminal organizations, collect thorough evidences, complete the repatriation of defendants and transfer of evidences through mutual legal assistance. In the future, we hope to use the model set up in this case to seek cooperation with more countries, demonstrate Taiwan's determination to actively combat transnational crime, and jointly serve international judicial justice.