

PUTIN DISCOVERS HE NEEDS TO INDICT ANOTHER RUSSIAN HACKER

Back when Russian hacker Yevgeniy Nikulin got arrested in Prague in association with US charges of hacking Linked in and DropBox, Russia quickly delivered up its own, far more minor indictment of him to set off a battle over his extradition. Months alter, Nikulin's legal team publicized a claim that an FBI Agent had discussed a deal with him, related to the hack of the DNC – a claim that is not as nuts as it seems (because a number of the people hacked had passwords exposed in those breaches). Whatever the reason, Russia clearly would like to keep Nikulin out of US custody.

And not long after Russian hacker Alexander Vinnik got detained in Greece related to the Bitcoin-e charges, Russia dug up an indictment for him too. Russia has emphasized crypto-currencies of late, so it's understandable why they'd want to keep a guy alleged to be an expert at using crypto-currencies to launder money out of US hands.

What's a more interesting question is why Russia waited so long to manufacture a Russian indictment for Pyotr Levashov, the alleged culprit behind the Kelihos bot, who is currently facing extradition to the US from Spain. Levashov was detained in April, but Russia only claimed they wanted him, too, a few weeks ago, around the same time Levashov started claiming he had spied on behalf of Putin's party.

Perhaps it's harder to manufacture a Russian indictment on someone the state had had no problem with before. Perhaps Russia has just decided this ploy is working and has few downsides. Or perhaps other events – maybe the arrest of Marcus Hutchins in August or the

extradition back to the UK of Daniel Kaye in September – have made Levashov's exposure here in the US even more problematic for Russia.

But I find it really curious that it took five months after Levashov got arrested for the Russians to decide it'd be worth claiming they want to arrest him too.

Update: Spain has approved Levashov's extradition to the US.