

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Former Senator Wayne James Extradited To U.S., Charged With Wire Fraud, Embezzlement Of Legislative Funds

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ST. CROIX -- Former disgraced U.S. Virgin Islands senator Wayne James, [who was arrested on June 29](#) in Modena, Italy, was extradited from Italy on Wednesday to face charges that he had defrauded the Government of the Virgin Islands of tens of thousands of dollars while he served as a senator in the Legislature.

The announcement was made by Assistant Attorney General Leslie R. Caldwell of D.O.J.'s Criminal Division, U.S. Attorney Ronald W. Sharpe of the District of the Virgin Islands, Special Agent in Charge Douglas A. Leff of the FBI's San Juan Division and

Virgin Islands Inspector General Steven Van Beverhoudt.

Mr. James, 55, of St. Croix was indicted on October 1, 2015, with two counts of wire fraud and embezzlement.



Wayne James taken into custody by Italian

police. (Credit: Gazzetta Di Modena)

According to the indictment, from 2009 to 2011, Mr. James served as chair of the Senate Committee on Youth, Education and Culture in the 28th Legislature. While serving as the chair, Mr. James allegedly obtained tens of thousands of taxpayer dollars for the purpose of acquiring and translating historical documents related to the “Fireburn,” an 1878 uprising by freed slaves in St. Croix.

The indictment alleges that Mr. James submitted false documents to the Legislature and received cash advances in order to conduct historical research on behalf of the people of the Virgin Islands. Mr. James embezzled the cash advances for his own personal benefit instead of using them for the intended purposes, according to the indictment.

An indictment is merely an allegation, and the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law, according to the U.S. D.O.J.

Italian paper Gazzetta Di Modena [showed Mr. James being taken into custody](#) by Italian police late June. Mr. James, who once lived in the province of Pisa, sponsored an amateur football team in Italy, according to the paper. He was traced to an apartment in Nonantola, Italy, where he was a guest of some friends in the city of [Modena](#), and was intent on writing a book titled “Manly Manners”, which contains a chapter dedicated to traditional balsamic vinegar of Modena. Mr. James ran a [blog with the same title](#); his most recent blog post being June 21.

The FBI, Office of the Virgin Islands Inspector General and Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation are investigating the case. Trial Attorneys Amanda R. Vaughn and Justin D. Weitz of the Criminal Division’s Public Integrity Section and the U.S. Attorney’s Office of the District of the Virgin Islands are prosecuting the case. Cristina M. Posa of the Justice Department’s Office of International Affairs provided significant assistance in this matter.