

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Wayne James Now In Custody Of V.I. Feds; Court Hearing Set For Monday

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ST. THOMAS -- Arriving here from New York Thursday afternoon after being extradited from Italy to face fraud and embezzlement charges, disgraced former senator Wayne James, above, appeared before U.S. Magistrate Judge Ruth Miller for his advise-of-rights hearing.

But a determination to detain Mr. James won't come until Monday afternoon, as Mr. James' lawyer, St. Croix attorney Michael Joseph, was unable to attend yesterday's hearing. Mr. James will remain in federal custody until then.

Mr. James, 55, was indicted on October 1, 2015, with two counts of wire fraud and one count of federal program embezzlement.

According to a federal 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 James allegedly obtained tens of thousands of taxpayer dollars for the purpose of acquiring and translating historical documents related to the “Fireburn,” an 1878 uprising by freed slaves in St. Croix.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.

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, according to the U.S. D.O.J.