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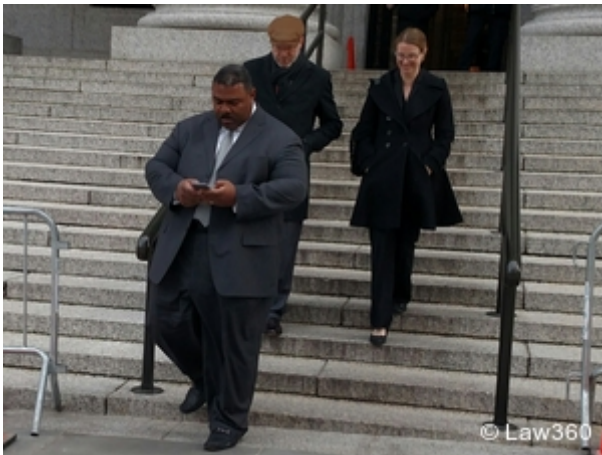
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2 Coin.mx Defendants Reject Plea Deals Ahead Of Trial

Share us on: By [Pete Brush](#)

Law360, New York (February 1, 2017, 5:10 PM EST) -- New Jersey pastor Trevon Gross and former Coin.mx bitcoin exchange operator Yuri Lebedev told a Manhattan federal judge on Wednesday that they are determined to stand trial for fraud and bribery and have turned down plea deals similar to one taken by a defendant who recently received probation.



Pastor Trevon Gross leaves Manhattan federal court with his legal team Wednesday. (Law360)

Gross and Lebedev, [the last two](#) of six defendants charged in the case before U.S. District Judge Alison J. Nathan, are set to go on trial Feb. 13. Gross is charged with taking bribes to let Lebedev and others take control of a bank, Hope FCU, so that Coin.mx could operate an illegal bitcoin money-laundering operation.

They acknowledged to Judge Nathan that they were offered a chance to cop to a count of obstructing an investigation by the [National Credit Union Administration](#) into the credit union but declined. Such a plea would have included a guidelines sentence of between 10 and 16 months in prison, prosecutor Eun-young Choi said.

Gross counsel Kristen M. Santillo of [Krovatin Klingeman LLC](#) said her client “wants to move forward with

trial,” and Lebedev counsel Eric M. Creizman said his client “is very resolute about going to trial.”

On Friday, defendant Michael Murgio [was sentenced](#) to probation by Judge Nathan after a similar plea. If convicted at trial, Gross and Lebedev face significantly longer potential prison terms.

Also looming in the run-up to trial is a defense allegation that the government is using a strategy of "selectively immunizing" certain witnesses that help its case while refusing to immunize other witnesses whose testimony might be more favorable to Gross.

Prosecutors "offered not to prosecute two of the witnesses who knew about the donation [to Gross's church] if they will testify ... but has not offered to do the same for the ones who are most helpful to Mr. Gross," a Santillo letter dated Tuesday reads.

The witnesses referenced were various members of the board of Hope FCU, which is now in a conservatorship.

Choi called it a “serious allegation,” saying, “We refute that strongly.” Judge Nathan asked for a prosecution letter responding to the selective immunization allegation before jury selection, which is set to begin Feb. 13. The trial could last up to three weeks.

Counsel for the two sides are already at odds with each other over what the defense calls a superseding indictment that was filed too late in the game.

The prosecution is represented by Eun-young Choi, Daniel S. Noble and Won S. Shin of the Department of Justice.

Lebedev is represented by Eric M. Creizman, Amanda Shoffel and Melissa Madrigal of [Creizman PLLC](#).

Gross is represented by Kristen M. Santillo and Henry E. Klingeman of Krovatin Klingeman LLC.

The case is U.S. v. Murgio et al., case number [1:15-cr-00769](#), in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York.

--Editing by Breda Lund. Photo by Pete Brush.

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[1:15-cr-00769](#)

Court

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Nature of Suit

Date Filed

November 5, 2015

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