## **Recent Indictment Highlights**

## **Trademark and Patent Scam Letters**

The Justice Department recently indicted Artashes Darbinyan of California for mail fraud and identity theft aimed at U.S. Trademark owners. Darbinyan, operating under the title "Trademark Compliance Center" sent out communications requesting money to unwary trademark owners. Some of our client received these notices.

Scams like Darbinyan's have, in recent years, greatly proliferated as trademark and patent records are now accessible online. Scam artists can now review trademark and patent records and easily acquire business and even personal information. Law requires that owners display a certain amount of biographical information to the public, meaning that there is no way to shield or block one's information on the U.S. Patent & Trademark Office (USPTO) website.

Many scam artists will use "official" titles in their correspondence. Some may even try to pose as the USPTO itself; they will use a similar looking seal and quote trademark and patent regulations to make their correspondence look "official." Others will use a sense of urgency; e.g. they will claim that your trademark or patent is in danger of "expiring" because of unpaid fees. These are all scams meant to coerce you into giving up your money.

The USPTO has set up a webpage that lists some known offenders and provides further guidance:

## http://www.uspto.gov/trademarks-getting-started/non-uspto-solicitations

In summary, you should not respond to any communication regarding the status of your trademark or patent that does not come directly from Peacock Myers. Feel free to contact us with any concerns or if you receive these notices and are unsure about what to do.