

CIA fraudster struck taxpayer gold with a program that never existed

A former senior CIA official pleaded guilty Tuesday to stealing roughly $194 million from the federal government through an elaborate fraud scheme built around a fake intelligence program.

David J. Rush, 49, of Ashburn, Virginia, admitted in federal court that he used his government position and high-level security clearance to create fictitious authorities and funnel taxpayer money into luxury purchases, according to the Justice Department.

Rush held a senior executive-level position and possessed a Top Secret/Sensitive Compartmented Information clearance. Prosecutors said his deception began even before he landed the job, with false claims about his education and military background.

Once inside government, Rush went further.

Court documents say he invented a Special Access Program and other supposed authorities, then used them to justify massive federal expenditures. Roughly $145 million was sent through wire transfers that ultimately funded real estate, luxury watches and at least one vehicle.

The scale of the fraud became clear when FBI agents searched Rush's Ashburn home on May 19.

Investigators recovered 298 gold bars, approximately $2.1 million in cash, €104,795 and a collection of high-end watches. The government had spent about $46 million on the gold alone.

CIA Director John Ratcliffe said the agency uncovered the suspected criminal activity internally and quickly brought in federal investigators.

“Following an internal investigation that identified potential crimes, CIA immediately referred this matter to the FBI,” Ratcliffe said. “David Rush abused his position and betrayed the public trust and should be held fully accountable for his actions.”

Attorney General Todd Blanche said the case reflected the Trump administration’s broader effort to target fraud and abuse inside the federal government.

“Federal employees are entrusted with serving the American people, not themselves,” Blanche said. “The Trump Administration is committed to rooting out waste, fraud, and abuse in the federal government, including by prosecuting those who foolishly defraud American taxpayers.”

FBI Director Kash Patel said Rush’s guilty plea confirmed the breadth of the scheme.

“By his own admission, David Rush defrauded the government of hundreds of millions of dollars, and then misused those funds for extravagant purchases,” Patel said.

Under the terms of his plea agreement, Rush agreed to forfeit the 298 gold bars, the seized cash, multiple properties, 30 luxury watches, many of them Rolexes, and two 2026 BMW Alpina vehicles. One of the BMWs was valued at roughly $172,000.

Rush is scheduled to be sentenced Jan. 28, 2027. He faces up to 20 years in federal prison.

The case comes amid a wider Justice Department push against large-scale fraud through its National Fraud Enforcement Division, which has also taken action in major disputes involving government spending, including a lawsuit targeting New York’s $10 billion Medicaid home-care program.

The Justice Department said the investigation into Rush’s conduct remains active. The Director of National Intelligence has also asked the Intelligence Community inspector general to conduct a separate review.