

Former Air Cargo Executive Extradited from Italy, Pleads Guilty to Price-Fixing

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The long arm of U.S. antitrust law recently caught a former air cargo executive. Maria Christina “Meta” Ullings, a Dutch national and former senior vice-president of Martinair Holland N.V., arrived in Atlanta, Georgia last month after Italian courts ruled in favor of her extradition.[1] Ullings was indicted in September 2010 in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia for her participation in an international conspiracy to fix the prices of air cargo. Specifically, the government alleged that she conspired with others to fix the level of surcharges for international air shipments of equipment, commodities, and consumer goods to customers in the U.S. and abroad from 2001 through 2006. Ullings then spent nearly 10 years as a fugitive until Italian authorities apprehended her in Sicily in July 2019.

Following her extradition, she first appeared in court on January 13, 2020. She subsequently pled guilty on January 23, 2020, to violating the Sherman Act based on her role in the price-fixing scheme.[2] Ullings will face a 14-month prison sentence (minus credit for her time in Italian custody prior to extradition), as well as a \$20,000 fine. Including Ullings, a total of 22 airlines and 21 executives have been charged in connection with the DOJ’s air cargo investigation, and courts have collectively imposed more than \$1.8 billion in criminal fines, and sentenced seven executives with prison time. Notably, Ullings’ prison sentence is the longest imposed in the air cargo investigation to date.

Italy’s decision to extradite Ullings makes it the seventh country to extradite a defendant in an Antitrust Division case, and the second extradition based solely on an antitrust charge. Her extradition and guilty plea underscore the administration’s commitment to pursue extradition of defendants for antitrust offenses.

The Antitrust Division’s stance on extradition is further confirmed by its recent remarks. Makan Delrahim, Assistant Attorney General for the Antitrust Division, commented that Ullings’ guilty plea “demonstrates the Antitrust Division’s commitment to bringing those who violate the antitrust laws—wherever located—to justice.” Andrew Finch, Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General, also emphasized the focus on extraditing antitrust offenders at a 2018 ABA Antitrust in Asia Conference.[3]

The fact that the Antitrust Division still aggressively sought Ullings’ extradition, despite the numerous fines and prison sentences already imposed in connection with this investigation, is significant. Moreover, the Antitrust Division clearly viewed the substantial passage of time since Ullings’ indictment—nearly a decade—as no reason to refrain from vigorously prosecuting her case.

[1] See Dep't of Justice, Press Release, Former Air Cargo Executive Extradited From Italy for Price-Fixing, *available at* <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/former-air-cargo-executive-extradited-italy-price-fixing>.

[2] See Dep't of Justice, Press Release, Extradited Former Air Cargo Executive Pleads Guilty for Participating in a Worldwide Price-Fixing Conspiracy, *available at* <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/extradited-former-air-cargo-executive-pleads-guilty-participating-worldwide-price-fixing>.

[3] See Dep't of Justice, Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Andrew Finch Delivers Remarks at the ABA Antitrust in Asia Conference in Seoul, *available at* <https://www.justice.gov/opa/speech/principal-deputy-assistant-attorney-general-andrew-finch-delivers-remarks-aba-antitrust>.

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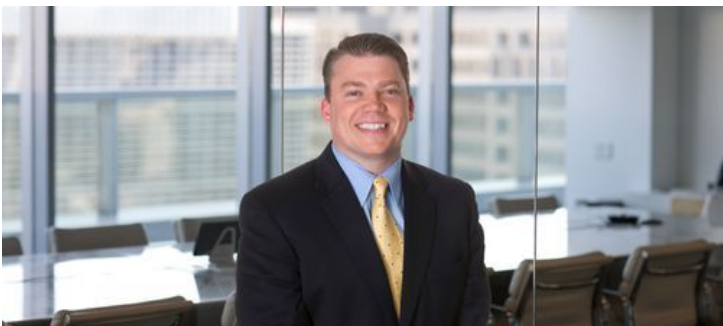
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