

IN THE NEWS

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Golden Beach man hot on the trail of Nazis

Investment banker offering rewards in three countries

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The first phase of Operation: Last Chance, a Simon Wiesenthal Center Nazi-hunting venture in the Baltics, was so successful, according to the Golden Beach investment manager who financed it, that it's being expanded to other countries.

Aryeh Rubin, 53, leaves today for Warsaw, Bucharest and Vienna, offering \$10,000 to anyone whose tips lead to arrests and convictions of Poles, Romanians and Austrians guilty of World War II atrocities.

"The Holocaust has basically been forgotten or denied in these places," said Rubin, who believes it's never too late to track down elderly Nazis and their collaborators. "I am tickled pink that these bad guys who did these horrible things have a little more angst in their waning days that someone is looking for them.

"These guys got away with it in 95 percent of cases."

Rubin and the Wiesenthal Center's Jerusalem director, Dr. Efraim Zuroff, last summer made the offer in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, which led to information on 241 suspect "names that nobody would recognize, but these were hands-on killers," said Rubin.

The names of 13 Ukrainian collaborators reportedly living in the United States were given to the Department of Justice's Office of Special Investigations, Zuroff said.

One of those cases he believes "has potential."

Information on 10 suspects has been turned over to the chief prosecutor of Latvia's Division of Investigation of Crimes of Totalitarian Regimes, according to the Wiesenthal Center.

The names of 32 suspects were given to the chief prosecutor of the Special Investigations Division of the Lithuanian Procurator General for formal investigation. The prosecutor has opened three murder investigations, Zuroff said.

"There's no question that the results clearly prove that the motivation and thinking of the project were correct," he said. "But one disappointment was that convicted murderers who in many cases may have been the only witnesses who knew what happened in sites of isolated murder didn't come forward."

However, ordinary people who wanted to unburden their consciences did come forward after reading about the reward in local newspapers, Rubin said.

"The most poignant was in a Lithuanian town where there were 50 Jewish families before the war and none afterward. Somebody [told Rubin] that they saw them in a covered wagon then heard the shots, saw the wagon return empty and the clothing thrown in the street."

The Polish leg of the upcoming trip will hold special meaning for Rubin, who lost relatives there in the Holocaust.

"In a 45-day period, my father saw his father, brother and niece die on the run" from the Nazis, he said.

Later this month, he and Zuroff plan to visit Germany, Ukraine and Belarus to search for more names.