



## AVENTURA

# President of Turnberry on the Green condo association arrested in \$1.5M theft

Miami-Dade jail records showed 62-year-old Gregori Arzumanov was booked Tuesday morning on charges including racketeering, organized fraud, money laundering, grand theft, and fraudulent use of a credit card

By **Brian Hamacher** and **Laura Rodriguez** • Published October 1, 2024 • Updated on October 1, 2024 at 6:15 pm





The president of a luxury condo association in Aventura has been arrested for allegedly embezzling over \$1.5 million from the association over a period of several years, authorities said.

Gregori Arzumanov, the president of the Turnberry On the Green Condominiums, a luxury high-rise overlooking the exclusive Turnberry Isle Country Club and across the street from Aventura Mall, was arrested Tuesday, records showed.

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Gregori Arzumanov

going on. They say once they

Miami-Dade jail records showed the 62-year-old man had previous criminal charges including racketeering, organized fraud and possession of a credit card.



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According to the association's website, Arzumanov has lived at Turnberry on the Green since 2004 and was elected board president in 2008.

Video posted on X Tuesday appeared to show Arzumanov being led out of the condo building's lobby in handcuffs.



Miami-Dade State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Roca and Mayor Howard Weinberg were expected to hold a press conference on Tuesday following the arrest.

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NBC6 reached out to an attorney who represented Arzumanov in a civil case but the attorney said he isn't representing him in this case.

At a news conference Tuesday afternoon, Miami-Dade State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle said Arzumanov embezzled over \$1.5 million from the association dating back to February 2017.

"Although everything appears wonderful at the Turnberry on the Green Condominiums, it turns out there was trouble in paradise," Fernandez Rundle said.

According to an arrest warrant, the 28-story, 378-unit condo building's association had an annual budget of over \$3 million that was paid by monthly fees from homeowners.

Arzumanov had stepped down as association president in January 2022 and was hired "at his insisting" to be the building's chief engineer, with an \$80,000 yearly salary, the warrant said.

Investigators found Arzumanov has a degree in quantum physics but no engineering background and no state-issued licensing for engineering, the warrant said.

Arzumanov resumed the position of association president in December 2022, but by taking over multiple top-level positions including property manager and chief engineer he had consolidated power, the warrant said.

"This combination of positions allowed the seek reimbursement for non-association e warrant said. "The defendant strategically c positions as a means to avoid oversight an


s.

The warrant also said Arzumanov used "ag

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r.

"These aggressive tactics which included, excessive fines, termination of employment, and lawsuits were all designed to keep everyone 'in line' and limit any challenges to his schemes," the warrant said.

 their fiduciary duties, allowed the defendant to operate his schemes and embezzle the [association] funds unabated."

Arzumanov was able to embezzle association funds through various entities along with credit card fraud, the warrant said.

One of those entities was a security business he formed in 2017, which he allegedly told board members was a not-for-profit company owned by the association and would save them money, the warrant said.

Arzumanov paid the thousands of dollars for the company's licensing and insurance liability with funds from the association, then terminated the association's security contract with another company and switched to his own company, increasing the monthly charges by over \$5,700, the warrant said.

In 2018, the first full year under his security company, the association paid the company \$384,000, well over the annual budget of \$335,000 and an increase of \$99,000 over the previous company, the warrant said.

The security company employed between 6 and 8 employees but didn't have enough employees to provide two employees per shift 24 hours a day, so he would hire building residents and others to cover shifts, the warrant said.

Fernandez Rundle said Arzumanov profited over \$1 million through the security company alone.



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	▶ <b>2021 PROFIT \$230,357</b>
	▶ <b>2022 PROFIT \$203,589</b>

**OVER \$1,000,000 PROFIT**

Arzumanov also arranged to have the association pay another business he was the CEO of a \$10,000 quarterly consulting fee beginning in September 2018, the warrant said.

He stopped that in 2019 but switched to another scheme in which he billed the association \$10,000 each quarter for "aquatic facilities services," which resulted in his company being paid \$40,000 by the association, the warrant said.

Arzumanov's company didn't perform "aquatic facilities services" and a separate company was paid for pool maintenance, the warrant said.

In another scheme linked to money launder  
deceased mother, despite no building units



## **MONEY LAUNDERING SCHEME**

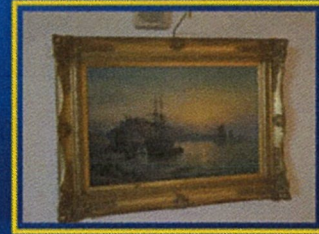
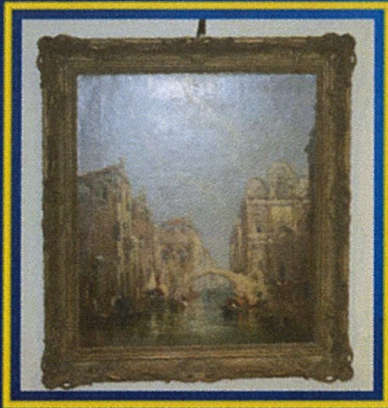
### **RENT CHECKS TO DECEASED MOTHER VALENTINA ARZUMANOVA**

- ▶ **CHECKS RANGED BETWEEN \$8,500 AND \$58,200**
- ▶ **MEMO ON CHECKS INDICATES PAYMENTS FOR RENT**
- ▶ **MOTHER DID NOT OWN PROPERTY**
- ▶ **DIED 16 MONTHS BEFORE RENT CHECKS BEGAN**

Arzumanov also allegedly spent association funds on items for himself, including everything from trips to a buffet to artwork he placed in his condo unit and in the building valued at around \$30,000, Fernandez Rundle said.



## CHARGED TO THE CONDOS



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Fernandez Rundle said he was able to pull off the schemes because many residents were absentee owners.

"There are some that use the association as a cash cow, they use it to steal, to benefit themselves, Fernandez Rundle said. "That's why we want everyone to be very alert be careful what you sign, ask questions."

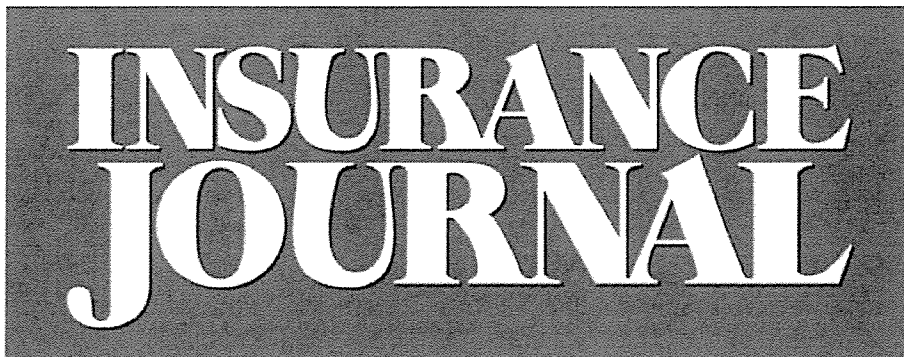
Aventura Police Chief Michael Bentolila said the crimes were brought to light by multiple residents. He apologized that the four-year investigati

"This was an intricate fraud case where he around the building, every asset used in and never seen anything like this in my entire ca

going on. They say once they

He also said Arzumanov was likely not the message for anyone who may have collaborated with him.





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# Miami Condo President Charged With Skimming \$1.5 Million in Association Fees

October 3, 2024

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The long-time president and engineer of an upscale Miami-area condominium remained in jail late Wednesday after he was charged with stealing It's the second time in two years that a condo association's leadership has been arrested on fraud charges.



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Early this week, Gregori Arzumanov, 62, was booked into jail in Miami, charged with multiple counts of fraud, money laundering, racketeering and [probe/3432161/](#)). The man, who also was property manager at Turnberry on the Green condominiums, in Aventura near North Miami Beach, alle

It was unclear if some of the fees were intended to go toward insurance premiums on the 28-story building. News outlets reported that the State A owner, among other methods. He also reported charged potential owners a fee fro conducting background checks on them.

He was held on \$500,000 bond. He had not posted bond by late Wednesday, records show.

State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle said at a news conference this week that investigators had probed the alleged crime for four years be Arzumanov reportedly used some of the diverted money to purchase food and art work for his own condo unit.

Fernandez Rundle noted that the episode is similar to that of the Hammocks Homeowners Association in 2022, in which association leaders were The Aventura arrest can be considered the latest blow for Florida's beleaguered condominium communities. After the collapse of the 21-story Che premiums.

A 2022 Florida law now requires condo associations to maintain larger reserve funds and to keep up with needed repairs. If maintenance fees we insurance also could be impacted.

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# “Recipe for fraud”: The alleged scam that rocked South Florida’s biggest HOA

Ex-board members accused of siphoning \$2M from association, revealing holes in state regulations

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The Hammocks Community Association claimed the couple owed thousands of dollars in arrears on assessments and that their house wasn't up to its standards. The driveway was the wrong color, a tree needed pruning and the hurricane shutters weren't up to code, one letter said.

"It was \$1,000 for this, another \$1,000 for that. They just threw amounts," Lourdes Padron said. "We were constantly harassed."

The couple tried to disprove the violations before the homeowners' association sent them a statement in February claiming they owed \$4,335. Threatened with foreclosure, they paid, sold their house and moved.

Residents at the Hammocks, home to South Florida's biggest HOA, had complained for years of mismanagement by association leaders and opaque financial statements. Authorities started poking into it around 2017, according to court records.

It would take five years until the Hammocks leadership collapsed. In November, police arrested four ex-board members and the husband of a former board president, alleging they looted roughly \$2 million from association coffers.

As criminal investigators and a court-appointed receiver now overseeing the HOA try to untangle an alleged web of financial deceit, authorities have warned more arrests could be coming.

The case struck a chord with communities that suspect their boards are engaging in fraud. It also illuminates the shortcomings of the state's HOA law.

While the law provides routes for legal action, it puts the onus on homeowners to react instead of giving a government authority the power to prevent fraud before it happens, according to attorneys.

Residents can get discouraged, since they would have to ante up for litigation, while the boards' attorneys are bankrolled through homeowners' dues.



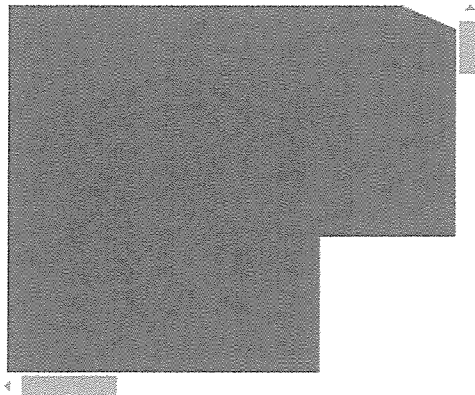
“It really is the perfect recipe for fraud,” said Dan Small, a white-collar crime attorney.

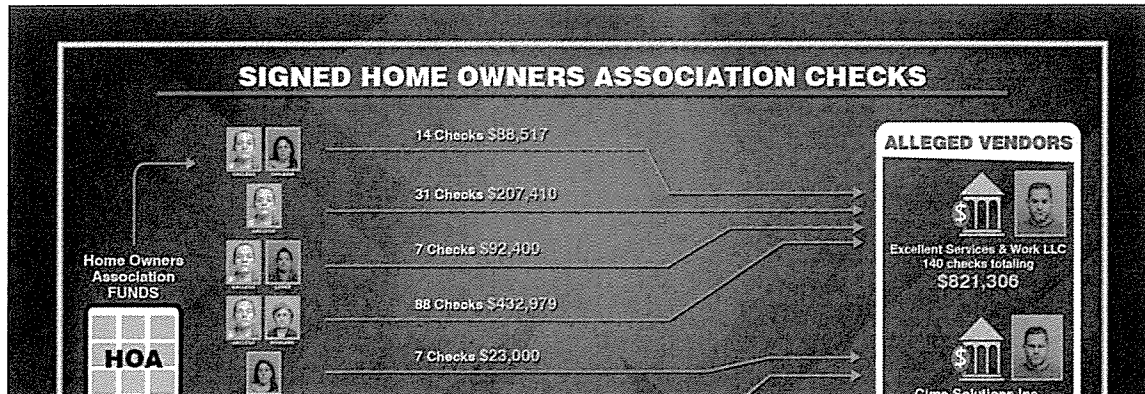
## It’s an HOA. No, it’s a city

Marglli Gallego rode to power at the Hammocks in 2015. Some residents viewed her as a savior from previous board members they disliked.

But investigators allege Gallego turned out to be far from righteous.

They say funds were siphoned from HOA coffers and through five companies — two led by Gallego’s husband, Jose Antonio Gonzalez, who also is charged. The companies allegedly posed as service providers and vendors to the Hammocks, according to a November arrest affidavit. In one example, Gonzalez’s Excellent Work & Services received over \$1.1 million from the HOA starting in 2016, the affidavit says.

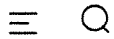




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Myriam Rodgers, 77; Monica Ghilardi, 52; and Yoleidis Lopez Garcia, 47, the affidavit says. Much of the money allegedly went into the pockets of Gallego and Gonzalez.

Roberto Trueba, who led the other three companies through which funds were funneled, started out providing legitimate services until Gallego handed him checks for no work, Trueba, who is cooperating with investigators, told authorities last year, according to the affidavit. He said he cashed the checks, kept some for himself and handed the rest to Gallego or to Excellent Work. Once, Trueba said, he was asked to wire funds to a bank account in Gallego's name in her native Colombia.

Attorney Sebastian Jaramillo said it is as if the board members didn't try to mask their alleged chicanery.

"The fraud to me seems very unsophisticated. It's a situation where she is paying to her husband's company, which is domiciled in her own addresses," he said, referring to Excellent Work. "There isn't even any attempt to hide it."



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Gallego, who was first arrested last year on claims that she misappropriated funds, faces new charges. She and Gonzalez are accused of racketeering, grand theft and money laundering.

All five defendants have pleaded not guilty. Their attorneys either declined to comment or didn't respond to a request for comment, except for Gonzalez's lawyer.



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"We are very curious to see what they [authorities] have to support those allegations, especially as it pertains to Mr. Gonzalez," Jude Faccidomo said.

The Hammocks encompasses over 6,500 single-family houses, apartments and townhouses. It's home to over 18,000 residents, spanning 3,800 acres between Southwest 120th and 88th streets and between Southwest 147th and 162nd avenues.

Therein lies the issue, said Small, of the law firm Holland & Knight.

The Hammocks is far bigger than the traditional HOA that the state law was crafted to target. Association leaders were left in control of a community larger than some cities, without the oversight that would exist in an actual municipality.

Case in point: Residents said the board imposed a 400 percent assessment hike in March.

“If the city council of the Hammocks, say it were organized that way, voted to raise taxes by 400 percent, it just wouldn’t happen,” Small said. “Yet that’s exactly what this association did.”



*Slides presented by the Miami-Dade State Attorney's office identifying the Hammocks HOA officers and detailing payments allegedly made to companies posing as vendors.*



## A threat and private eyes

Some Hammocks residents said the more they spoke out, the more the former board retaliated.

After Eldridge “Manny” Coburn signed a petition this year to recall the board, “all hell fell through,” he said. The HOA barred him from using amenities, saying he was overdue on assessments. Coburn said he was paying on time.

The recall effort came after the association closed polls early in January, citing a bomb threat. Investigators say the HOA never provided proof of this.

In legal filings, the HOA and Gallego claim they are the true victims.

Investigators issued three subpoenas for financial records, which amounted to over a million pages of documents and were “outrageously burdensome,” the HOA claims in a lawsuit filed this year against the state attorney’s office. An HOA attorney told a judge that the board refused to comply because it “doesn’t trust the state,” filings show.

Gallego claimed she was a passionate leader of the Hammocks who spearheaded free activities such as after-school tutoring and Zumba classes, according to a suit she filed against Miami-Dade police officers who were investigating her. She claimed her “political opponents” led a campaign

against her, culminating in death threats. The association was therefore within its right to pay for a surveillance firm at the Hammocks, Gallego's lawsuit claims.

The HOA tapped into the Hammocks' budget for many of its legal fights, according to the November arrest affidavit. For Gallego's four criminal defense attorneys, the HOA has shelled out more than \$250,000, according to the affidavit.

## **No one to turn to**

State law takes a hands-off approach to HOA oversight, but the Hammocks case shows this isn't working, said real estate attorney Lauren Fallick.

The law mandates annual financial audits, which the Hammocks allegedly ignored starting in 2018. Yet the statute requires HOAs to provide the reports only once a records request is made, rather than requiring that they be submitted annually as proof they were completed, experts said.

Residents in dispute with the HOA can pursue mediation or sue — but at a cost, according to Avi Tryson, a real estate and HOA attorney.

"This is still a legal expense for the residents for the hourly rate for the mediator and whoever is their attorney at the mediation," he said.

Following the Hammocks arrests, elected officials have called for a tightening of the law.

Meanwhile, the Padrans have made Tamarac their new home.

“You didn’t know what kind of threats were going to come next,” Lourdes Padron said. “We were forced to leave.”

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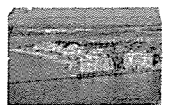
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