

The 'Mad Russian' wins fight to stay

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Body

The '**Mad Russian**' **fought** the law. This time, he **won**.

The U.S. government has dropped its deportation case against Vladimir Noskov, the 44-year-old University City resident and Delmar Loop character who faced expulsion for a two-decades-old marijuana-related charge.

"I'm so relieved," Noskov, who is widely known as the **Mad Russian**, said Tuesday.

He avoids a return to Ukraine, a country he hadn't seen in almost 30 years (and which was still part of the Soviet Union when he left), a place his family fled as persecuted Jews.

A deportation hearing had been scheduled for next month.

Noskov's case drew attention both because of the controversial man caught in the middle and the immigration laws that ensnared him.

His recent troubles began last August when Noskov was arrested for creating a scene outside the Blueberry Hill restaurant. It was a minor infraction, but it alerted immigration officials to Noskov's record. Back in 1984, when he was 22 and living in California, Noskov pleaded guilty of felony possession of marijuana with intent to distribute. He was fined and sentenced to one year of probation.

Unbeknownst to Noskov, his crime became a deportable offense when the nation's immigration laws were overhauled in 1997. Federal authorities considered him a "criminal alien." They caught up with him last year.

Unlike his sister and mother, who emigrated with him in 1976, Noskov never became an American citizen, leaving him vulnerable to deportation. He called it a youthful mistake.

Facing expulsion, Noskov got his California conviction reduced to a nondeportable offense. At an immigration court hearing in June, a judge asked a federal prosecutor if the government wanted to push forward. This week, Noskov learned the case was dropped.

Noskov for years worked as a gonzo-style radio and public-access TV reporter in St. Louis. To some people, that made him the embodiment of American values such as free speech. Others found him distasteful.

He now works as a **Russian** translator at an older adults living center.

Noskov said he was unsure how the decision would affect him.

"I guess I start living my life again," he said.

Graphic

PHOTO

PHOTO - Vladimir Noskov was facing deportation over a marijuana-related charge from 1984. "I'm so relieved," he said.

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