

Judge rules wartime law applies to Big Dig

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BOSTON, Sept. 3 (UPI) -- A federal judge extended the statute of limitations on charges against Boston "Big Dig" highway construction contractors by citing an obscure wartime law.

U.S. District Judge Richard Stearns ruled Tuesday that prosecutors can extend the normal five-year statute of limitations to pursue multiple fraud charges against six former managers of a Big Dig aggregate contractor because the United States was at war in Iraq during much of the time, The Boston Globe reported.

Stearns tapped a little-known Wartime Suspension of Limitations Act of 1942, which suspends the statute of limitations on alleged fraud committed against government agencies up until three years after the U.S. president declared hostilities to be over.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Brian Kelly told the Globe that Stearns' ruling was the first time U.S. prosecutors had successfully applied the 1942 law to alleged crimes committed after World War II.