



**U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement**

**PROTECTING NATIONAL SECURITY AND UPHOLDING PUBLIC SAFETY**



## **News Releases**

**October 5, 2007**

### **Two attorneys at law firm plead guilty in relation to visa fraud scheme**

LOS ANGELES - A name partner and an attorney at one of the West Coast's largest immigration law firms have pleaded guilty to charges of filing fraudulent employment visa applications on behalf of foreign nationals, including some of the law firms own workers.



Steven James Rodriguez, 40, a senior associated at the law firm formerly known as Korenberg, Abramowitz & Feldun (KAF), pleaded guilty this afternoon to one count of making false statements to federal agents. Daniel E. Korenberg, 58, who founded the law firm now known as the ASK Law Group, pleaded guilty yesterday to two counts of visa fraud and one count of conspiracy to commit visa fraud.

Korenberg and Rodriguez were charged in a 33-count indictment handed down in February following a long-term investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the U.S. Department of Labor - Office of Inspector General, and the California Employment Development Department.

According to the indictment, beginning in 2000 and continuing through at least February 2003, the defendants filed fraudulent employment-based visa petitions on behalf of foreign nationals seeking temporary work authorization or permanent residency in the

United States. As alleged in the indictment, at least 14 of the aliens who benefited from the visa fraud scheme were KAF employees

Two other KAF employees were also charged in the case, Philip Abramowitz, a partner at the firm, and Heidi Poepping, one of the firm's supervisory paralegals. Both defendants pleaded guilty.

KAF, which is now known as ASK Law Group, is based in the San Fernando Valley community of Sherman Oaks, and the firm maintains offices in Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego and Las Vegas.

The indictment detailed how the firm hired foreign nationals without work authorization for a variety of support positions, including paralegal jobs. The defendants then allegedly applied for fraudulent work visas for those employees and paid them "off the books" in cash until the visas were approved. To support the visa petitions, the indictment alleges that the defendants created documents making false claims about the aliens' work experience and offers of employment. Rodriguez and others made false statements to the U.S. government in connection with immigration petitions filed on behalf KAF clients.

Employment-based visas normally are issued when a business in the United States needs a person to fill a specific job and is unable to find a qualified employee in the U.S. labor pool. The business can file a petition to allow a particular alien, who is supposed to be qualified to fill the job, to enter the United States to work for the business.

Korenberg and Rodriguez are scheduled to be sentenced by United States District Judge Percy Anderson on January 18.

In addition to the law firm, the probe targeted two Los Angeles-area employment agencies, Job Seekers International and Employmasters International. The investigation revealed that the employment agencies identified employers, both real and fictitious, to attest that the aliens seeking the work visas were being recruited for highly skilled jobs that, in most instances, did not exist. In 2005, the three owners of those employment agencies and one of their employees pleaded guilty to visa fraud and conspiracy charges. Those four defendants are awaiting sentencing.

The other defendants charged in the case are:

- Philip Abramowitz, 53, of Agoura Hills, a partner in KAF, pleaded guilty last year to conspiracy and visa fraud and is scheduled to be sentenced December 17;
- Heidi Poepping, 45, of Moorpark, a paralegal at KAF, pleaded guilty in February to conspiracy to commit visa fraud and is scheduled to be sentenced December 10;
- Arturo Valencia, 55, of Walnut, the owner of Job Seekers International, pleaded guilty two years ago to one count of visa fraud and one count of conspiracy and is scheduled to be sentenced January 7;

- Maria Theresa Resurreccion, 39, of Anaheim, an employee of Job Seekers International, pleaded guilty two years ago to one count of visa fraud and one count of conspiracy and is scheduled to be sentenced December 3;
- Arnel Dizon, 35, of Corona, a co-owner of Employmasters International, pleaded guilty two years ago to one count of visa fraud and one count of conspiracy and is scheduled to be sentenced December 10; and
- Marlyn Rodriguez Dizon (Arnel's wife), 43, of Los Angeles, a co-owner of Employmasters International, pleaded guilty in May 2005 to one count of visa fraud and one count of conspiracy and is scheduled to be sentenced November 20.

-- ICE --

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.