



News Releases

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ATLANTA, GA

4 criminal aliens plead guilty to bribing ICE employee

Following bribery attempt, ICE official worked in undercover role to assist investigators with case

ATLANTA — Four convicted criminal aliens pleaded guilty in federal district court in Atlanta on Wednesday to bribing a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) employee to alter their reporting requirements and criminal histories. The ICE official, who reported the initial bribery to ICE investigators, continued to work in an undercover capacity to assist with the investigation.

Rotana Khov, 34, of Atlanta; Pisa Phosai, 34, of McDonough, Ga; Hing Bun, 42, of Riverdale, Ga.; and Voeun Lim, 26, of Charlotte, N.C., pleaded guilty Aug. 3.

"ICE takes all bribery attempts of our employees very seriously," said David D'Amato, special agent in charge of the ICE Office of Professional Responsibility overseeing Atlanta. "All allegations of bribery are investigated thoroughly and swift enforcement action is taken when appropriate."

According to the U.S. Attorney's Office, the defendants are all aliens who were subject to deportation due to previous criminal convictions.

All of the defendants' countries must issue travel permits to effectuate deportation. Because these aliens could not be deported within 90 days from the time that an immigration official issued the order of removal, the defendants were released from custody but were required to report periodically to an ICE employee.

In August 2010, Phosai approached an ICE Enforcement and Removal Assistant (ERA) and offered to pay her \$1,500 to cancel his reporting requirement. The ERA immediately reported Phosai's offer to ICE special agents and other investigators, and the ERA then began to work in an undercover role. Acting at the direction of the special agents, the ERA agreed to alter Phosai's reporting requirement in exchange for money. Phosai was not able to raise the money, but he introduced her to Khov, who he said was willing to pay to have his reporting requirement eliminated. Khov paid the ERA \$1,500 in early September 2010.

Khov subsequently introduced other aliens in similar situations to the ERA, including defendants Bun and Lim. In late September 2010, Bun paid \$4,000 to have his reporting requirements cancelled. In October 2010, Lim paid \$3,000 to the ERA. In all, six aliens paid a total of \$18,500 to the ICE official to have their reporting requirements removed. Khov kept approximately \$4,000 of the money as a fee for referring the other individuals to the ERA.

Recorded conversations between the ERA and the defendants indicated that the defendants believed that, by eliminating their reporting requirements, the ERA was also removing their criminal histories from their ICE records, which would allow them to stay in this country legally and eventually apply for American citizenship.

Khov, Phosai, Bun, Lim and three other individuals were indicted in April 2011 on one count of conspiracy to bribe a public official and six counts of bribing a public official. Khov pleaded guilty to all seven counts. He could receive a maximum sentence of 95 years in prison and a fine of up to \$1,750,000. Phosai pleaded guilty to the conspiracy count and one count of bribing a public official. He could receive a maximum sentence of 20 years and a fine of up to \$500,000. Bun pleaded guilty to the conspiracy count. He could receive a maximum sentence of five years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000. Lim pleaded guilty to one count of bribing a public official. He could receive a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000.

"These four defendants were marked for deportation but thought that they could beat the system by bribing an immigration employee," said U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Georgia Sally Quillian Yates. "Thanks to the honesty and cooperation of the employee, these defendants will now have to spend time in prison before they are deported."

A sentencing date for the defendants has not yet set before Chief U.S. District Judge Julie E. Carnes.

Assistant United States Attorney Paul R. Jones is prosecuting the case.