

ICE removes South Korean woman wanted by Korean authorities for embezzlement

CHANTILLY, Va. – A South Korean woman wanted in her home country on embezzlement charges was removed from the United States Monday by officers with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s (ICE) Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO).

Heakyung Kim, 51, of South Korea, was admitted into the United States in March 2014 under the Visa Waiver Program with authorization to remain in the United States until June 25, but she did not depart the United States in accordance with the program.

On May 8, the District Court in Incheon, South Korea, charged Kim with embezzling the Korean equivalent of \$23 million in U.S. currency from a religious organization. South Korean law enforcement and subsequently issued a warrant for her arrest. Based on the active arrest warrant, Interpol issued a Red Notice for Kim May 16.

The Interpol Red Notice prompted a collateral request from Homeland Security Investigations Attaché Seoul for U.S.-based HSI special agents and ERO officers to conduct a joint investigation into Kim’s whereabouts.

HSI special agents and ERO officers arrested Kim Sept. 4 at a McLean apartment complex for remaining in the United States longer than permitted, which violated the conditions of her admission to the United States.

ERO officers removed Kim from the United States Monday via a commercial flight that departed Washington Dulles International Airport in Chantilly. On Oct. 7, upon arrival at Seoul Incheon International Airport, ERO officers transferred Kim to the custody of South Korean law enforcement authorities.

“The removal of Ms. Kim demonstrates how ICE works with its law enforcement partners across the globe,” said ERO Washington Field Office Director Yvonne Evans. “We take our country’s immigration laws seriously, and individuals who try to game the system, especially those wanted on charges abroad, will be removed to their home countries.”

In fiscal year 2013, ICE conducted 368,644 removals nationwide. Nearly 60 percent of ICE's total removals had been previously convicted of a criminal offense; 82 percent of individuals removed from the interior of the United States had previously been convicted of a criminal offense.

In addition to convicted criminals, the agency's enforcement priorities include those apprehended while attempting to unlawfully enter the United States, illegal re-entrants – individuals who returned to the United States after being previously removed by ICE – and immigration fugitives. In fiscal year 2013, 98 percent of ICE removals met these priorities – a record high.