

## **THREE ARRESTED IN ALLEGED IMMIGRATION SCHEME**

### **Two Fairfax City Lawyers, Annandale Restaurateur Accused of Falsifying Green Card Documents**

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Two Fairfax City lawyers and an Annandale restaurateur were arrested yesterday on federal immigration fraud charges for allegedly filing phony documents to get green cards for illegal immigrants.

The alleged scheme is virtually identical to one that landed an Arlington lawyer a 10-year prison sentence this year.

Federal agents picked up Steven Y. Lee, 48, and Jordan N. Baker, 36, principals in the law firm Lee & Baker, outside their homes, then searched their firm's office at 3251 Old Lee Hwy. for most of yesterday, seizing computers and records. At a hearing in federal court yesterday afternoon, Assistant U.S. Attorney John T. Morton said investigators found \$12,600 cash in Lee's car, and he was ordered held without bond. Baker was released on a \$25,000 bond.

Also arrested yesterday was Byung Chul Kim, 32, also known as Billy Kim, who owns the Todam Koll restaurant at 7331 Little River Tpk. Authorities allege that he was a willing participant in Lee and Baker's plan to file the phony documents with the government, then sell the opportunity for a green card to an immigrant for as much as \$50,000.

An affidavit for search warrants by FBI Special Agent Amylynn Murray said Lee and Baker had probably pocketed close to \$1.2 million from the scheme, much of it in cash. In addition to searching the law office, Lee's home on Leehigh Drive in Fairfax County and Kim's restaurant, federal authorities are trying to seize Kim's 2002 BMW X5, Baker's 1998 Lincoln Continental and Lee's 2000 S430 Mercedes-Benz.

Lee and Baker specialized in immigration law, particularly for Korean immigrants, Murray's affidavit said. For many immigrants, the best way to obtain permanent resident status, or a green card, is by having an employer certify that the immigrant is needed to fill a certain job and that no U.S. citizens are available. This "labor certification" is handled by state labor agencies, such as the Virginia Employment Commission, and then by the federal Department of Labor.

If a labor certification is granted, the immigrant then applies for a green card with the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (formerly part of the Immigration and Naturalization Service).

The fees for the process are minimal, but the time and paperwork can be confusing to new immigrants, so law firms offer to help. Some firms offer to provide sponsoring employers, as did the firm of Samuel Kooritzky of Arlington.

Kooritzky, however, didn't actually find employers. Instead, he forged the names and signatures of local restaurants and businesses on hundreds of labor certification applications. He then charged thousands of dollars to unaware immigrants, whose applications were lost when Kooritzky was arrested last summer. He was convicted of 56 fraud counts and sentenced in March to 10 years in prison and ordered to pay \$2.3 million in restitution.

Lee and Baker are accused of a similar scheme, except that federal investigators believe they actually had willing employers, such as Kim, participating. Employers would receive a fee from Lee and Baker, usually about \$5,000, in exchange for allowing their names to be used on the labor certifications, but they would never hire the immigrants, court documents said.

Once a labor certification is granted, an applicant or law firm is allowed to substitute another person to receive the green card. Authorities allege that Lee and Baker would file phony names and work histories for people in South Korea, then sell substitutions to local Koreans for fees between \$10,000 and \$50,000.

But an FBI agent in Seoul checked out 60 of Lee and Baker's original applicants and found that 58 were bogus, the affidavit said. The FBI also developed nine informants, including seven former secretaries at the law firm and at least one ex-girlfriend of Lee's. All told Murray that Lee and Baker were filling out and signing false labor certification applications, the affidavit said.

One informant told Murray that Lee charged clients \$50,000 to substitute their names into an application: \$10,000 as an attorney fee, \$20,000 as a sponsor fee and \$20,000 as a premium for avoiding a year-long wait. Only \$5,000 would go to a sponsor, and the lawyers would keep the rest, the court papers allege.