

'I WILL WAIT,' SAYS FIANCEE IN VISA FLAP

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)

May 19, 1989, FRIDAY, FIVE STAR Edition

Copyright 1989 St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Inc.

Section: NEWS; Pg. 1A

Length: 1120 words

Byline: Bill Smith Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

Body

A woman from West Germany who admits she faked a U.S. visa because she was "desperately in love" with a young American soldier probably will be forced to return home without being allowed to marry him. "It was a case of my heart over my mind; my feelings were stronger than reason," said Petra K. Padel, 29, explaining Thursday why she attempted to enter the United States with a falsified visitor's visa. "I will wait for him forever," she said. "If I know that he is coming back to me, I don't mind waiting." Padel was arrested last Friday night at Lambert Field en route from Frankfurt, West Germany, to Houston. She and Berry L. Pierce, 23, of Riverside, Calif., a soldier assigned to Fort Hood, Texas, were planning to be married this week. Andre J. Nutis, assistant officer in charge of the St. Louis office of the Immigration and Naturalization Service said Thursday that an "exclusion hearing" would be held either today or Monday to determine whether she should be returned to her home country. Both Nutis and Padel's attorney, Peter Ferrara, said an immigration judge almost certainly would bar Padel from entering the United States. Nutis also said the couple would not be allowed to marry while she was here. "We're in the immigration business, not in the marrying business," Nutis said. Nutis also said that immigration officials would bar Pierce from visiting Padel before she is returned. "We have a longstanding policy that only close relatives can see each other," he said.

But Ferrara said, "There's nothing in the regulations saying they can't see each other; there's nothing in the regulations saying they can't be married." Pierce, on leave from Fort Hood, spent most of the day Thursday sitting in the waiting room of the Immigration Service offices here awaiting word on Padel's plight. When he learned that she probably would be returned to West Germany this weekend or early next week, he said, "I've served my country for almost four years and what do they do for me? It makes me not even to want to live here anymore." He said he would talk to his commanders once he returns to Fort Hood and attempt to get a transfer back to West Germany, where he previously was stationed and where he met Padel. He said he believed that if the two somehow could be married in St. Louis before she was returned, the army would look more favorably on his request to return to Germany. Immigration officials said that once Padel is returned to West Germany, she will not be allowed to reapply for a visa for at least a year. Even then, the visa might not be approved. "I can't wait a year," Pierce said. He said there is a chance that Padel may be pregnant and "I want to be with her when my child is born." Pierce and Padel said that the two initially planned to be married on April 22 in Texas, but Padel had difficulty getting a visitor's visa. One of the reasons for the difficulty, her attorney said, was because the U.S. consulate in Frankfurt knew that the two planned to get married and that, as a result, she would remain in the United States. Padel said she decided last week that she could wait no longer. She boarded a Trans World Airlines flight in Frankfurt and flew to St. Louis, where she intended to catch a flight to Houston. Pierce said he first knew she was coming to the United States when she called him from the Frankfurt airport. Pierce learned of his fiancee's arrest Friday night as he waited for her at the Houston airport. He flew immediately to St. Louis. "There's no question the law was violated," Ferrara said. "In desperation, they made moves and choices that were unfortunate." As she sat Thursday at a table in the offices of the Immigration and Naturalization Service here, Padel said, "This is a very high price to pay. "I would never do this again. "He sends me letters into the jail; I read them, sometimes, 10 times over and over. It's the only thing that keeps me going. "If I ever come back to the United

'I WILL WAIT,' SAYS FIANCEE IN VISA FLAP

States, Im going to make a big circle around Missouri." Padel is being held in a cell at the Jennings police station until a decision is made on whether to return her. "She's just a sweet, good-hearted person with a great personality," Pierce said. "Ive found the woman I want to marry, and Ill marry her." She said, "I don't care where we live as long as we can be together."

Classification

Language: English

Subject: IMMIGRATION (89%); IMMIGRATION LAW (88%); CITIZENSHIP (75%); PASSPORTS & VISAS (73%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (73%); WEDDINGS & ENGAGEMENTS (72%); JUDGES (72%); NEGATIVE PERSONAL NEWS (69%); EMOTIONS (68%); ARRESTS (64%)

Company: IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (82%); IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (55%)

Organization: IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (82%); IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (55%)

Geographic: HOUSTON, TX, USA (79%); RIVERSIDE, CA, USA (79%); TEXAS, USA (93%); CALIFORNIA, USA (79%); FRANKFURT AM MAIN, GERMANY (79%); UNITED STATES (93%); GERMANY (92%)

Load-Date: October 22, 1993