

Sept. 17-23;

Trading in Human Lives

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Body

Federal prosecutors accused Robert E. Porges, a Manhattan lawyer whose Chinatown firm has represented thousands of Chinese immigrants seeking political asylum in the United States, of participating in the smuggling of illegal immigrants into the country from China.

The Porges firm, with roughly 40 lawyers and paralegals, was also accused of helping smugglers, also known as snakeheads, to "abduct" illegal immigrants and of falsifying the applications of some 6,000 asylum seekers, who paid the firm a total of \$12 million. Mr. Porges's wife, Sheery Lu Porges, is accused of helping smugglers kidnap 17 Chinese immigrants since 1997.

Mr. and Mrs. Porges and five of their employees pleaded not guilty to all the charges, including racketeering, conspiracy and immigration fraud. Susan Sachs

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