

8 Charged in Crackdown on White Tigers Gang

The New York Times

December 16, 1993, Thursday, Late Edition - Final

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Distribution: Metropolitan Desk

Section: Section B;; Section B; Page 9; Column 1; Metropolitan Desk; Column 1;

Length: 597 words

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Body

In the third crackdown on an Asian gang in three months, Federal authorities announced the indictment yesterday of eight members of the White Tigers gang, a Queens-based group that law-enforcement officials say was deeply involved in smuggling illegal immigrants from China.

Leading gang members, including David (Lobster) Lien and Edwin (Lumpy) Arroyo, were not charged with immigrant smuggling, but with murder, arson and racketeering activity over a five-year period. Law-enforcement officials said the arrests effectively beheaded the gang, as did arrests of members of the Fuk Ching gang in September and of the Tung On gang last week.

"Two is a pattern, three is a trend," said Elizabeth Glazer, chief of the organized crime unit in the United States Attorney's office for the Southern District. "I think that's what we have here."

The investigations of the three cases did not overlap, Ms. Glazer said. Although she and other prosecutors seem to be mining a rich new source of information on gang activity, Ms. Glazer attributed the timing of the indictments to effective coordination between Federal prosecutors and New York City police detectives familiar with patterns of gang activity.

Enforcers for Smugglers

Like the Fuk Ching gang, the White Tigers typically helped immigrant smugglers by meeting immigrants as they arrived in the United States by air or by sea and holding them captive until payment of a smuggling fee was arranged.

In June, less than two weeks after the arrival of the Golden Venture with nearly 300 passengers aboard, immigration agents raided a house in Bayside, Queens, and found 22 Chinese immigrants being guarded by members of the White Tigers. The immigrants had arrived on June 2 in California, and the gang's leader, Wei Hung Lee, 32, was arrested there the same day.

Mr. Lee faces immigrant-smuggling charges in a Federal District Court in Brooklyn, with a maximum penalty of five years in prison. But it is yesterday's indictment -- with charges that could mean life imprisonment -- that has really undercut the gang, officials said.

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Ms. Glazer described the White **Tigers** as a relatively undisciplined **gang** of 35 to 40 members. She said they preyed mostly on shops and individuals in Flushing, Queens, but in addition to smuggling-related activity, its members organized relatively sophisticated criminal acts.

The indictment describes a carefully planned murder in April 1991, when **gang** members ambushed three jewelers in the Park Avenue viaduct near Grand Central Terminal, sprayed gunfire on their victims and made off with more than \$250,000 in cash and an undetermined amount of jewelry.

Mr. Lien and Mr. Arroyo were also **charged** in the indictment with murdering Jian Ping Liu in December 1988 and trying to kill Mr. Liu's wife and child. The two were promised \$7,000 for each body by an associate, the indictment said.

David (Lobster) Lien, whose nickname refers to one of his favorite dishes, was arrested on Tuesday evening at a grocery store on Elizabeth Street in Chinatown that is run by his family, the police said.

Edwin (Lumpy) Arroyo, named for a piece of flesh between two scars on his forehead, was arrested early yesterday as he emerged from the Edgecombe Correctional Facility on 163d Street in the Bronx, where he is on a work release program.

A third **gang** member, Ruan Jian Wei, was arrested at his residence on Henry Street in Chinatown. Mr. Lee and two others are already in captivity and two **gang** members were not identified, listed in the indictment only as "John Doe."

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Subject: SMUGGLING (92%); ALIEN SMUGGLING (91%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (90%); INDICTMENTS (90%); LAW ENFORCEMENT (90%); ARRESTS (90%); PUBLIC PROSECUTORS (90%); INVESTIGATIONS (90%); FEDERAL INVESTIGATIONS (90%); IMMIGRATION (89%); **GANGS** (89%); MURDER (89%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (78%); ORGANIZED CRIME (78%); POLICE FORCES (78%); SPECIAL INVESTIGATIVE FORCES (78%); CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS (77%); CORRECTIONS (75%); JAIL SENTENCING (75%); ARSON (71%); LAW COURTS & TRIBUNALS (67%)

Company: GRAND CENTRAL MARKETS (51%); GRAND CENTRAL MARKETS (51%)

Industry: JEWELRY (74%); JEWELRY RETAILERS (64%)

Geographic: NEW YORK, NY, USA (92%); NEW YORK, USA (79%); CALIFORNIA, USA (79%); UNITED STATES (92%); CHINA (79%)

Load-Date: December 16, 1993