

5 Charged in Work Visa Fraud; Men Secured False Papers for Immigrants, Indictment Alleges

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Body

A Bethesda lawyer and four businessmen have been **charged** with submitting **false** documentation to state and federal officials to obtain **work visas** for dozens of undocumented **immigrants** during a five-year period, federal authorities announced yesterday.

From Jan. 1, 1998, to Dec. 31, 2002, the defendants used fraudulent documentation to obtain **immigrant visas** for at least 50 foreign workers, according to the 23-count **indictment** unsealed in U.S. District Court in Greenbelt.

The defendants allegedly filed fraudulent **papers** with labor officials seeking **visas** for **immigrants** to fill jobs as restaurant workers, brick masons, painters and automotive repair shop managers, the **indictment** states.

Some of the **immigrants** using the documents have been apprehended and deported, said a federal investigator who spoke on condition of anonymity. Others never actually came to the United States, and their documents might have been used for other workers, he said.

Allan J. Doody, special agent in **charge** of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement bureau in Baltimore, said determining who may have obtained the **work** permits and where they are now is part of an ongoing investigation. "Our goal is to ensure the integrity of the system," he said.

The defendants are **charged** with conspiracy to harbor undocumented **immigrants**, labor certification **fraud**, racketeering, and aiding and abetting. Two of the defendants harbored **immigrants** who had entered the country illegally from Canada, federal authorities said.

Federal prosecutors are seeking the forfeiture of \$600,000 in cash and six homes or businesses in Potomac, Herndon, McLean and New York City, the **indictment** states.

"The **indictment** should send a message to those who take advantage of the immigration laws -- particularly immigration attorneys and businessmen who exploit their small businesses and law practices to sponsor aliens illegally -- that they will be prosecuted aggressively," U.S. Attorney Thomas M. DiBiagio said in a statement.

Maqsood Hamid Mir, 51, an immigration lawyer with a practice in Bethesda and a home in Potomac, said he would continue to run his law practice despite the **indictment**. He declined further comment.

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Yesterday, Abdul R. Javaid, 68, owner of a gas station and automotive repair shop from McLean, was brought before a federal magistrate in handcuffs.

Javaid's attorney, John T. Riely, told the court that his client is a U.S. citizen and has no criminal record. At the end of a brief hearing during which Javaid did not enter a plea, U.S. Magistrate Judge Jillyn K. Schulze allowed Javaid to remain free pending further court appearances with a collateral bond -- specifically, his house.

Schulze directed Javaid to surrender his passport and not to travel beyond the Washington area.

In an interview, Riely said Javaid, a Pakistani emigre who is a naturalized citizen, "certainly asserts his innocence." "I think he was caught up in something right now that's beyond his knowledge," Riely said. The attorney declined to elaborate.

The other people indicted are Mohammad Bajwa, 38, of Herndon, owner and operator of a money transfer business and construction company; Zulfikar Ali, 43, of Virginia Beach, owner of several gas stations in Virginia and in New York; and Jamal Hussain, 45, of Kingston, N.Y. Hussain and Ali are brothers, the indictment states.

If convicted, the defendants each face up to 20 years in prison on the racketeering charges, and lesser penalties on the other charges.

Last year, a federal judge in Virginia sentenced an Arlington immigration lawyer, Samuel G. Kooritzky, to 10 years in prison for fleecing hundreds of desperate immigrants in a massive labor fraud scheme.

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