

Immigrant Fraud Case May Reach Beyond Va.; Arlington Lawyer Accused of Filing Bogus Labor Forms

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Byline: Tom Jackman, Washington Post Staff Writer

Body

The **Arlington lawyer accused** last week of immigration **fraud** in **Virginia** by **filing** false documents is being investigated for submitting thousands of similar **forms** in other states, a federal prosecutor said yesterday during a hearing in U.S. District Court in Alexandria.

"There are thousands of other applications **filed** by [Samuel G.] Kooritzky in other states that we are pursuing," including Pennsylvania, Assistant U.S. Attorney John Morton told a magistrate.

Kooritzky, 63, was arrested at his Capital Law Centers office on Wilson Boulevard in **Arlington** last week after a **Labor** Department probe found that he had **filed** about 2,700 requests for **labor** certification on behalf of **immigrants** since last year. Kooritzky's applications claimed that individual restaurants could not find American workers and needed the **immigrants**, but the **Labor** Department said the restaurants did not even know of the applications.

Yesterday's hearing was for Ronald W. Bogardus, 65, a contract engineer for the State Department who is **accused** of being Kooritzky's accomplice. During a search of Bogardus's **Arlington** apartment, agents found a suitcase stuffed with what they believed was \$ 500,000.

But **Labor** Department Special Agent Andrew H. Shea testified yesterday that the suitcase did not have \$ 500,000. It had \$ 940,000, mostly in tightly wrapped bundles of \$ 100 bills, and \$ 60,000 was elsewhere in the apartment, Shea said. Agents also found that Bogardus had three passports, two train tickets to New York and \$ 2.5 million in a bank account.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Welton Curtis Sewell ordered Bogardus held without bond until trial, saying, "He has every incentive and so far he gives every indication that, if prosecuted, he will flee."

Last week, Sewell froze all assets of Bogardus and Kooritzky, but he freed Kooritzky once he surrendered his passport. Kooritzky did not return a telephone call yesterday seeking comment.

Morton told Sewell that Kooritzky charged \$ 8,000 to \$ 20,000 to guide an **immigrant** through the **labor** and immigration processes. Investigators estimate that Kooritzky and Bogardus **may** have made \$ 11 million to \$ 21 million over the past 18 months.

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Those numbers could soar if the applications in other states turn out to be fraudulent, Morton said.

Thousands of immigrants who went through the process with Kooritzky's Capital Law Centers are terrified of what may happen to their status in the United States. When a noncitizen obtains a certification from the Department of Labor stating that a company wants to hire him and that no American workers are available, he may then take the certification to the Immigration and Naturalization Service and get a "status adjustment" -- from illegal to legal immigrant -- and a permanent visa, or green card. It was unclear yesterday how many people Kooritzky has helped land green cards or, subsequently, U.S. citizenship.

"I know he has harmed many, many Korean American lives in the United States," said Yun Jung Yang, a Wheaton immigration lawyer who was in the courtroom yesterday. Yang said that she did not know whether the criminal charges are true but that immigrants "are entitled to a benefit, which they sought through him. He's allegedly taken that away by filing the fraudulent labor certifications."

Yang said Kooritzky advertised heavily in the Asian community, offering not only his legal services but also help in finding an employment sponsor.

Finding potential employers apparently was Bogardus's job with Kooritzky, according to a 60-page affidavit Shea filed last week. At least one restaurant manager, at a Chili's in Springfield, recalled that Bogardus came in twice and talked about hiring cooks and visa issues.

The manager's name and signature later showed up on more than 100 labor certification applications, but she had not filed any, Shea wrote. The Silver Diner in Arlington and an Applebee's in the Alexandria area each had 184 false applications filed by Kooritzky, authorities allege.

At the hearing, Shea said Bogardus, the former chief fire marshal of California, married a 28-year-old Thai woman in February 1999 but did not divorce his first wife in Ventura, Calif. "The defendant is a bigamist," Shea said, claiming that Bogardus created a phony Arlington divorce decree with scissors, tape and a photocopier.

Bogardus did not speak during the hearing. Alan H. Yamamoto, one of Bogardus's attorneys, said that Bogardus suffers from a heart condition and high blood pressure and that "he's not going anywhere. Whatever this incident is, at most it's an aberration and certainly nothing he's ever going to do again."

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