

Would-be immigrants bilked in Pa. asylum-fraud scheme, feds say

The Philadelphia Inquirer

July 30, 2008 Wednesday, CITY-D Edition

Copyright 2008 Philadelphia Newspapers, LLC All Rights Reserved

Section: NATIONAL; P-com News; Pg. A01

Length: 719 words

Byline: By Emilie Lounsberry

Inquirer Staff Writer

Body

He had a half-million bucks in a safe hidden under a floor at his upscale home in Holland, Bucks County. Two 10-ounce gold bars, too. And in three safe-deposit boxes, about \$700,000 more in cash.

Those were some of the proceeds, **federal** authorities contended yesterday, of a massive immigration-fraud **scheme** carried out by David Lynn, 33, a businessman who allegedly made \$3 million from the scam with help from five other Russian-born codefendants.

The indictment **says** Lynn, who was born in Russia and lived in Israel before coming to the United States, operated a phony asylum business called Lynn International, which he claimed was a translation service.

Lynn pretended to be a lawyer who specialized in immigration cases, the indictment states, and operated from offices in Northeast Philadelphia and Southampton, Bucks County.

With help from his codefendants, Lynn prepared at least 380 fraudulent asylum applications, charging **would-be immigrants** from \$8,000 to \$12,000, the indictment states. The **scheme** took place between January 2003 and March 2007, according to the indictment, and Lynn guaranteed his clients that they would get asylum.

But few did, acting U.S. Attorney Laurie Magid **said** at a news conference yesterday. Those cases are being reexamined, she **said**, and many other applicants already have left the United States. "Many of them were here illegally," she **said**.

The lure of asylum - a coveted grant intended to help **immigrants** who have faced persecution in their native countries for religious, racial or political beliefs, or for membership in certain organizations - was intense.

"People were strung along," **said** Magid, who **said** that some of the dissatisfied clients told immigration authorities what had happened.

Magid **said** investigators soon uncovered an "enormous" case of **asylum fraud**. She **said** Lynn and other defendants coached applicants to lie and **say** they were being persecuted for being Baptists, Jews, Jehovah's Witnesses, Gypsies or homosexuals.

"Lynn and his codefendants systematically and repeatedly exploited this provision for their own financial gain," Magid **said**. "This fraud was about nothing more than money."

The asylum-seekers were mostly from Russia, with others from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Ukraine.

Would-be immigrants bilked in Pa. asylum-fraud scheme, feds say

Assistant U.S. Attorney Terri Marinari **said** Lynn had "no legal status" in the United States. His defense attorney, Ellen C. Brotman, declined to comment yesterday.

Marinari **said** that if Lynn, who is charged with conspiracy, **asylum fraud** and money laundering, is convicted of all charges, he faces a maximum possible sentence of about eight to 10 years in prison under **federal** sentencing guidelines.

Magid **said** that a search warrant was executed at Lynn's house in March 2007 and that a safe packed with cash was found, along with two gold bars. Lynn also maintained a Swiss bank account, the indictment states.

The government is seeking forfeiture of \$3 million in the alleged proceeds as well as the cash seized.

The others indicted, all originally from Russia, are Lynn's father-in-law, Yevgeny Zemlyansky, 61, of Feasterville, Bucks County; Nelly Katsman, 41, of Holland, Bucks County; and Ilya Zherelyev, 46, Anatoly Zagranichny, 62, and Akbar Kadirov, 54, all of Northeast Philadelphia.

Zemlyansky was Lynn's full-time assistant, instructing clients to conceal the fact that Lynn and others had coached them to give false testimony at immigration hearings, the indictment stated.

He also was charged with a separate count for allegedly submitting housing-subsidy applications that concealed his income from the fraudulent immigration business.

Zagranichny coached applicants how to lie about being persecuted, the indictment **said**, and Zherelyev was a bodyguard for Lynn and also prepared false applications. Kadirov was a driver and collected fees from applicants, and Katsman prepared applications, the indictment **said**.

Zemlyansky and Kadirov appeared in court briefly yesterday; defense attorney Anna Durbin, who represents Zemlyansky, and Jeffrey Miller, who represents Kadirov, declined to comment on the case. Joel Harvey Slomsky, who represents Zherelyev, also declined to comment.

Contact staff writer Emilie Lounsberry at 215-854-4828 or elounsberry@phillynews.com.

Inquirer staff writer Kristin E. Holmes contributed to this article.

Graphic

Photograph by: Feed Loader

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Publication-Type: Newspaper

Subject: IMMIGRATION (91%); POLITICAL ASYLUM (91%); INDICTMENTS (90%); FRAUD & FINANCIAL CRIME (90%); LAWYERS (88%); SENTENCING (77%); SPECIAL INVESTIGATIVE FORCES (77%); **FEDERAL** INVESTIGATIONS (77%); CONSPIRACY (76%); LITIGATION (76%); INVESTIGATIONS (76%); JEWS & JUDAISM (75%); CHRISTIANS & CHRISTIANITY (75%); RACE & ETHNICITY (72%); MONEY LAUNDERING (71%); CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS (70%); SEARCH WARRANTS (69%); RELIGION (69%); CORRECTIONS

Would-be immigrants bilked in Pa. asylum-fraud scheme, feds say

(67%); PROTESTANTS & PROTESTANTISM (64%); ASSOCIATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS (64%); JAIL SENTENCING (62%); SENTENCING GUIDELINES (62%); PRESS CONFERENCES (51%); GAYS & LESBIANS (50%)

Industry: LAWYERS (88%); TRANSLATORS & INTERPRETERS (69%)

Geographic: UNITED STATES (94%); RUSSIAN FEDERATION (90%); CZECH REPUBLIC (79%); UKRAINE (79%); ISRAEL (79%); SLOVAKIA (79%)

Load-Date: July 30, 2008

End of Document