

## Two Attorneys Plead Guilty in Visa-Fraud Scheme - MabuhayRadio

Written by Romeo P. Marquez

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By ROMEO P. MARQUEZ

**SAN DIEGO** - A founder of a popular law firm in the West Coast and his senior associate pleaded guilty on Friday (Oct. 5) to charges related to the filing of fraudulent employment visa applications, the United States Attorney's Office has disclosed.

A government spokesman identified the two lawyers as **Daniel E. Korenberg**, 58, who pleaded guilty to two counts of visa fraud and one count of conspiracy to commit visa fraud; and **Steven James Rodriguez**, 40, who pleaded guilty to one count of making false statements to federal agents.

Korenberg and Rodriguez are scheduled to be sentenced by United States District Judge Percy Anderson on January 18, the spokesman said in a press statement to Mabuhay Radio.

The law firm **Korenberg, Abramowitz & Feldun (KAF)** is now known as the ASK Law Group, the acronym for Abramowitz, Stefanski & Korenberg, and is headquartered in Sherman Oaks.

For a time, the firm was called Korenberg & Abramowitz which maintains an office in San Diego managed by former Philippine Consul General Edwin Bael, and in Los Angeles, San Francisco and Las Vegas. The law firm is popular with Filipino clients.

Korenberg and Rodriguez were charged in a 33-count indictment handed down in February following a long-term investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the U.S. Department of Labor - Office of Inspector General, and the California Employment Development Department.

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According to the indictment, beginning in 2000 and continuing through at least February 2003, the defendants filed fraudulent employment-based visa petitions on behalf of foreign nationals seeking temporary work authorization or permanent residency in the United States.

As alleged in the indictment, at least 14 of the aliens who benefited from the visa fraud scheme were KAF employees. Two other KAF employees were also charged in the case, Philip Abramowitz, a partner at the firm, and Heidi Poepping, one of the firm's supervisory paralegals. Both defendants pleaded guilty.

The indictment details how KAF hired foreign nationals without work authorization for a variety of support positions, including paralegal jobs. The defendants then allegedly applied for fraudulent work visas for those employees and paid them "off the books" in cash until the visas were approved.

To support the visa petitions, the indictment alleges that the defendants created documents making false claims about the aliens' work experience and offers of employment. Rodriguez and others made false statements to the U.S. government in connection with immigration petitions filed on behalf KAF clients.

In addition to the law firm, the probe targeted two Los Angeles-area employment agencies, Job Seekers International and Employmasters International.

The investigation revealed that the employment agencies identified employers, both real and fictitious, to attest that the aliens seeking the work visas were being recruited for highly skilled jobs that, in most instances, did not exist.

In 2005, the three owners of those employment agencies and one of their employees pleaded guilty to visa fraud and conspiracy charges. Those four defendants are awaiting sentencing. The other defendants charged in the case, according to the government spokesman, are:

**Philip Abramowitz**, 53, of Agoura Hills, a partner in KAF, pleaded guilty last year to conspiracy and visa fraud and is scheduled to be sentenced December 17;

**Heidi Poepping**, 45, of Moorpark, a paralegal at KAF, pleaded guilty in February to conspiracy to commit visa fraud and is scheduled to be sentenced December 10;

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**Arturo Valencia**, 55, of Walnut, the owner of Job Seekers International, pleaded guilty two years ago to one count of visa fraud and one count of conspiracy and is scheduled to be sentenced January 7;

**Maria Theresa Resurreccion**, 39, of Anaheim, an employee of Job Seekers International, pleaded guilty two years ago to one count of visa fraud and one count of conspiracy and is scheduled to be sentenced December 3;

**Arnel Dizon**, 35, of Corona, a co-owner of Employmasters International, pleaded guilty two years ago to one count of visa fraud and one count of conspiracy and is scheduled to be sentenced December 10; and

**Marlyn Rodriguez Dizon** (Arnel's wife), 43, of Los Angeles, a co-owner of Employmasters International, pleaded guilty in May 2005 to one count of visa fraud and one count of conspiracy and is scheduled to be sentenced November 20.

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