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## Asian man planning to file suit against Edison He accuses police and immigration officials of conspiring to arrest him

Wednesday, August 16, 2006

BY TOM HAYDON  
Star-Ledger Staff

An Asian man at the center of an ongoing controversy in Edison filed notice yesterday that he intended to sue township officials and the police, accusing them of conspiring with immigration agents who arrested him during an Aug. 3 protest against police.

An attorney for Edison resident Rajnikant Parikh filed a notice of intent to sue the township, seeking \$5 million in damages and specifically naming Mayor June Choi, township police Chief George Mieczkowski and an Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer.

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The notice was the latest development that began with Parikh's July 4 arrest by a township officer on charges of assaulting the officer and urging other to join the attack. Parikh, who was released following his arrest, later filed a complaint against the officer, but authorities cleared the officer of any fault.

Ravinder Bhalla, a Newark attorney representing Parikh, accused the police and ICE of conspiring to arrest his client during the rally, which was organized to protest Parikh's arrest during a July 4 incident at a township apartment complex.

"They had his address and knew where he lived for a month," Bhalla said, referring to his client. "The timing of the arrest indicates the purpose was not the deportation order but to silence the community and to silence him. The arrest had a silencing effect."

The arrest violated Parikh's right to free speech and assembly, and his right against unlawful seizure, the attorney said.

Parikh, who remains in federal custody, was first arrested by Edison police on

July 4 on charges of hitting Officer Michael Dotro and inciting others to join in the attack as the officer tried to disperse hundreds of people watching fireworks set off at the Hilltop apartment complex.

After the Aug. 3 arrest, ICE officials said they had worked with the knowledge and assistance of Edison police. Choi and Mieczkowski insisted they weren't aware that immigration agents were planning to arrest the 30-year-old liquor store cashier at the protest, and started internal investigation into the role of township police in the arrest.

Edison spokesman Jerry Barca, when asked about Parikh's intent to sue, would only say "The matter has been referred to the township attorney."

ICE spokeswoman Jamie Zuie back yesterday, when asked about the conspiracy allegation, said im migration officers were simply doing their job.

Parikh "was arrested based on his deportation order. Our responsibility is to carry out that order," Zuieback said.

Fallout in the wake of Parikh's arrest has led to a string of events. On Friday, his wife, Julie Patel, submitted petitions signed by nearly 400 people urging the Indian to withhold any platform or forum from Choi, including prohibiting his participation in the annual parade held Sunday.

Choi walked in the parade, despite a silent and peaceful protest held moments before the procession began.


On Monday, 150 police officers rallied outside the Edison municipal building, criticizing the internal investigation and calling for the mayor to resign.

Bhalla yesterday said he had also met with FBI agents concern ing Dotro's actions the night of July 4 arrest.

Michael Schwarz, president of the Edison Policeman's Benevolent Association, said an internal review already cleared Dotro.

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