

# Yee wanted campaign cash from gun conspiracy, feds say

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SACRAMENTO -- The history of politics is littered with unorthodox and illegal schemes to raise campaign cash, but the method allegedly used by Sen. Leland Yee stands apart.

A criminal complaint released Wednesday says the San Francisco Democrat wanted donations in return for connecting an Italian gangster from New Jersey with an international arms dealer. The gangster was an undercover federal agent.

Although Yee is better known as a gun control advocate in the Capitol, the complaint says he talked tough about having shady contacts who could obtain automatic weapons.

"Do I think we can make some money? I think we can make some money," the senator said, according to the complaint. "Do I think we can get the goods? I think we can get the goods."

The complaint says Yee described his approach to arms dealing as "agnostic."

"People want to get whatever they want to get. Do I care? No, I don't care. People need certain things," Yee allegedly said.

The weapons, the complaint says, were going to be imported through the Port of Newark in New Jersey.

Yee promised that his arms-dealer contact was the "real deal," but it's unclear whether Yee was actually capable of delivering on his alleged promises to procure weapons.

Nevertheless, he discussed potential deals at length with the undercover agent, according to the criminal complaint.

In December, the agent made a \$5,000 contribution to Yee's campaign for secretary of State in hopes of being put in touch with the dealer, according to the complaint.

Later, the agent met with Yee and Keith Jackson, a political consultant, at a San Francisco coffee shop to talk about the potential arrangement.

Yee, the complaint says, told the agent his contact "has things that you guys want" but warned him that this business was not for "the faint of heart." He talked about a trip to the Philippines where he had "armed guards with machine guns."

The agent told Yee he wanted up to \$2.5-million worth of weapons. After they arrived in Newark, some would be sent to North Africa or Sicily, the agent said. Yee asked if he wanted automatic or semiautomatic guns, according to the complaint -- the same kind of weapons the senator has sought to restrict.

During a Feb. 25 meeting, Yee said he had to be careful because of a separate case involving Sen. Ron Calderon (D-Montebello), who was wrapped up in a federal bribery sting. But

according to the criminal complaint, that didn't stop him from continuing to discuss a potential weapons deal.

Jackson later told the agent that Yee wanted to use a Daly City resident, Wilson Sy Lim, to help traffic the weapons, according to the complaint. Lim had associates in the Philippines who had access to weapons and needed money in their attempt to overthrow the government, Jackson said.

Conversations continued between Yee and the agent, the complaint says. At one point, Yee allegedly promised to procure weapons equivalent to the M-16 rifle used by U.S. soldiers. The agent also expressed interest in obtaining shoulder-fired rocket launchers.

On March 11, according to the complaint, the agent met with Yee, Jackson and Lim at a restaurant in San Francisco. Lim claimed to have access to Israeli assault weapons, which could be procured through a Filipino military captain. He asked for a list of weapons the agent wanted, the complaint says, but Yee said the weapons deal "would not happen until after the California Secretary of State election."

He was worried about someone catching wind of "revenue streams" leading back to him. At the restaurant, the complaint says, Yee and Jackson discussed how they could mask the agent's payments as campaign donations.

Yee, Jackson and Lim are all facing conspiracy charges for their alleged roles in the gun trafficking scheme.