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2 plead guilty in kidnapping of boy

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In hopes of getting a break at sentencing, two men have pleaded guilty to kidnapping a Chinatown merchant's 3-year-old son last April and have agreed to help in the arrest and prosecution of a third man who investigators say was the "moving force" behind the abduction.

Wei Hong Chen, 22, a waiter from Hollywood, Fla., and Yan Ming Lin, 29, of Atlantic City, entered guilty pleas Tuesday to charges of kidnapping, conspiracy, interstate demand for ransom and use of a gun in a crime of violence before U.S. District Judge Jan E. DuBois in Philadelphia.

The two were ensnared by an extensive FBI dragnet that ended April 5, when agents stopped their car on Route 195, about 15 miles north of Baltimore, three days after the child, Andy Siu, had been snatched from his father's store in Chinatown.

They were arrested minutes after the boy had been recovered unharmed, stashed inside a Cardiff, N.J., hotel room.

Yesterday, seven months after the ordeal, the boy's mother, Hsiu Siu, said, "The boy is fine." She said he had shown no psychological effects from the ordeal.

Agents found a loaded .38-caliber revolver in the car, which permitted federal prosecutors to add the weapons charge — carrying a mandatory five-year prison sentence — to the indictment against the two men.

Including the weapons offense, Chen and Lin face 17 to 20 years in prison on the charges. Assistant U.S. Attorney Paul A. Sarmousakis said yesterday that their sentences could be reduced significantly if they helped authorities locate and pro-

cute the third man, who is described as the leader of the kidnap plot.

The crime, this city's first kidnap-for-ransom in at least 15 years, occurred April 2 at about 6:15 p.m., when Andy Siu was snatched as he played with his brother Victor, 5, behind a large front window at his father's Tung Yute Bean Sprout Store in the 200 block of North 11th Street.

The boys' mother had been cooking dinner in a back room at the time. At first, she did not believe Victor's panicked description of the abduction. Minutes later, though, her husband, King Siu, received a telephone call. "We have your son, don't call the police," said a male voice that sounded young and Asian. Then the phone went dead.

King Siu, however, immediately walked the one block to the Sixth Police District, at 11th and Winter Streets, and told officers of the kidnapping. That night, FBI agents in-

stalled a wiretap on the store's phone.

The wiretap recorded the ransom demand, which came in at 1:17 a.m. The caller said he had Siu's son and wanted \$150,000. The caller said he would telephone again in two to three days.

According to documents filed with the case, the kidnapers had checked into a Howard Johnson Hotel in Newark, Del. On April 4, they called at 6:55 p.m., telling Siu to be ready to pay the ransom demand the next day. On April 5, at about 3:35 p.m., Siu turned over \$150,000 in cash to one of the kidnapers at the Chart House restaurant on Delaware Avenue in Philadelphia.

The transfer of money set into operation the elaborate surveillance operation that led to the capture of the two men. FBI agents were watching the ransom drop.

Although federal prosecutors will not discuss details of the operation, they said that agents followed Chen and Lin as they drove a blue Pontiac with Florida license plates out of the restaurant parking lot, and then south on Interstate 95 to an exit near Elkton, Md., where one of the men got out of the car to use a pay phone.

It was at that point that the Sius received another call on the wiretapped telephone, informing them that their son could be found at the Murray Hotel in Cardiff, N.J.

Shortly after agents recovered Andy Siu at the hotel, other agents who had been following the blue Pontiac forced Chen and Lin to stop on the interstate. The two surrendered. Inside the car, agents found \$5,000 of the ransom money on each of the men. The rest of the money was found in a jacket in the car. Sarmousakis said a boy, a third passenger in the car, was identified as the son of Lin's sister.

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