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JUSTICE NEWS

Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, September 2, 2010

**Six People Charged in Human Trafficking Conspiracy
for Exploiting 400 Thai Farm Workers**

WASHINGTON – The Justice Department announced that a federal grand jury in Honolulu indicted Mordechai Orian, an Israeli national; Pranee Tubchumpol, Shane Germann and Sam Wongsesanit of Global Horizons Manpower Inc., located in Los Angeles; and Thai labor recruiters Ratawan Chunharutai and Podjane Sinchai for engaging in a conspiracy to commit forced labor and document servitude. The charges arise from the defendants' alleged scheme to coerce the labor and services of approximately 400 Thai nationals brought by the defendants to the United States from Thailand from May 2004 through September 2005 to work on farms across the country under the U.S. federal agricultural guest worker program. Orian, Tubchumpol and Chunharutai are also charged with three substantive counts of compelling the labor of three Thai guest workers.

If convicted, Orian and Tubchumpol each face maximum sentences of 70 years in prison, Chunharutai faces a maximum sentence of 65 years in prison, Germann and Wongsesanit each face a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison, and Sinchai, who was recently charged in Thailand with multiple counts of recruitment fraud, faces a maximum sentence of five years in prison if convicted in the United States.

The indictment alleges that the defendants conspired and devised a scheme to obtain the labor of approximately 400 Thai nationals by enticing them to come to the United States with false promises of lucrative jobs, and then maintaining their labor at farms in Washington and Hawaii through threats of serious economic harm. The defendants arranged for the Thai workers to pay high recruitment fees, which were financed by debts secured with the workers' family property and homes. Significant portions of these fees went to the defendants themselves. After arrival in the United States, the defendants confiscated the Thai nationals' passports and failed to honor the employment contracts. The defendants maintained the Thai nationals' labor by threatening to send them back to Thailand, knowing they would face serious economic harms created by the debts.

The indictment also alleges that the defendants confined a group of Thai guest workers at Maui Pineapple Farm and demanded an additional fee of \$3,750 to keep their jobs with Global Horizons. Those workers who refused to pay the additional fee were sent back home to Thailand with unpaid debts, subjecting them to the high risk of losing their family homes and land.

This case has been investigated by the Honolulu Division of the FBI. This case is being prosecuted by trial attorneys Susan French and Kevonne Small of the Criminal Section of the Civil Rights Division and Susan Cushman of the U.S. Attorney's Office in the District of Hawaii. Services to victims have been provided by the Thai Community Development Center in Los Angeles.

The charges, in a five-count indictment, are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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Civil Rights Division

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