

JUSTICE NEWS

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Missouri Man Pleads Guilty to Racketeering Conspiracy and Fraud in Foreign Labor Contracting Charges

WASHINGTON – Andrew Cole pleaded guilty today to racketeering conspiracy and fraud in foreign labor contracting charges arising from his role in a criminal enterprise that engaged in numerous criminal activities, including forced labor, fraud in foreign labor contracting, visa fraud, mail fraud, identity theft, tax evasion and money laundering, the Justice Department announced today.

According to court documents, Cole recruited various foreign nationals from the Dominican Republic by falsely representing the terms, conditions and nature of their employment as hotel workers in the Kansas City area. At the time Cole recruited these foreign nationals, he knew that they would not be paid the wages promised, that many would be sent to work in factory positions in Alabama and that threats of deportation and other adverse immigration consequences would be made to the foreign nationals by members of the criminal enterprise in order to maintain the foreign nationals' labor.

"The defendant took advantage of foreign workers' hopes to live the American Dream. He recruited them with false promises and with the knowledge that these workers would be exploited and their labor coerced," said Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division Thomas E. Perez. "The Department of Justice will continue to vigorously prosecute these cases."

Multiple co-defendants have previously pleaded guilty in connection with the case. Ilkham Fazilov pleaded guilty on Aug 9, 2010, to racketeering conspiracy for his role in aiding and abetting others in the scheme. Jakhongir Kakhkharov also pleaded guilty to racketeering conspiracy on March 17, 2010. Alexandru Frumusache pleaded guilty on Oct. 7, 2009, to forced labor trafficking. Trial for the remaining defendants is set for Oct. 18, 2010.

The case was investigated by the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI, the Department of Labor, the Internal Revenue Service, the Kansas Department of Revenue and the Independence, Mo., Police Department. U.S. Attorney Criminal Chief Gene Porter, Assistant U.S. Attorney William Meiners and Civil Rights Division Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit Trial Attorney Jim Felte prosecuted this case for the government.

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Civil Rights Division