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JUSTICE NEWS

Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, December 17, 2010

Woman Sentenced in Columbus, Ohio, for Role in Human Trafficking Conspiracy

WASHINGTON - Maria Terechina, a national of the Russian Federation, was sentenced today in U.S. District Court in Columbus, Ohio, for her role in a human trafficking conspiracy involving guestworkers who worked in hotels as housekeepers and laundry workers. Terechina was sentenced to 12 months in prison and ordered to pay nearly \$250,000 in restitution to her victims. After her release from prison, Terechina will be on federal supervised release for three years.

During her guilty plea hearing in April, Terechina admitted that she engaged in the harboring and transporting of dozens of illegal aliens from Russia, Estonia, Belarus, Ukraine, and other Eastern European nations. The guestworkers who labored for Terechina worked in various hotels in and around Columbus. Terechina admitted that she agreed to hold some of the workers' passports and immigration documents in order to prevent them from leaving their employment. Terechina also admitted that she defrauded the United States of approximately \$185,000 in taxes.

"The defendant participated in a scheme that created a condition of modern-day slavery, using intimidation to deprive the workers of their freedom for her own financial gain," said Thomas E. Perez, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. "The Department of Justice is committed to vigorously prosecuting cases of human trafficking."

Carter M. Stewart, the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio, stated "We will continue our efforts to stem the rising tide of involuntary servitude by bringing traffickers to justice and working to restore the rights and dignity of human trafficking victims."

"The FBI is committed to protecting all persons, regardless of nationality, from slave trafficking. Those who profit from such activity should recognize the consequences of their actions," said Keith L. Bennett, Special Agent in Charge of the Cincinnati Division of the FBI.

Jose A. Gonzalez, Special Agent in Charge, IRS, Criminal Investigations, stated, "Employers who employ illegal aliens and do not withhold employment taxes are victimizing legitimate businesses by creating an unfair competitive advantage."

The case involving Terechina is related to the case of United States v. Yaroslav Rochniak, et al., in the Western District of Pennsylvania. All six defendants in that case also have pleaded guilty.

The Terechina case was investigated by Special Agents of the FBI; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of the Inspector General; and the U.S. Department of Treasury, Internal Revenue Service. The case was jointly prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Daniel A. Brown from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Ohio, and Trial Attorney Ryan R. McKinstry from the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice.

10-1460

Civil Rights Division