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APRIL 1, 2011 ATLANTA, GA

Employment agency owner sentenced in scheme to recruit undocumented workers in Atlanta, Southeast US

ATLANTA - Chun Yan Lin, 44, of Doraville, Ga., was sentenced Thursday in federal court for conspiring to transport and harbor illegal aliens, following a joint investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the Department of Homeland Security, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Lin was sentenced to two years in federal prison to be followed by three years of supervised release, and was ordered to forfeit \$5,200 to the United States. Lin pleaded guilty to the charges on Oct. 20, 2010. Lin is expected to be deported upon completion of her sentence.

In all, 23 defendants have been sentenced and 10 employment agencies shut down in ten related cases.

"The recruitment, harboring and transportation of illegal aliens are very serious crimes," said Brock Nicholson, special agent in charge of ICE HSI in Atlanta. "Those who put our nation's security at risk to pocket a profit can expect to face similar serious consequences."

From June 2009, through June 2010, Lin owned an employment agency called "Lucky," in Chamblee, Ga., and conspired with others to transport and provide jobs to illegal aliens. Lin and other employment agency owners primarily placed the illegal aliens in restaurant jobs in South Carolina, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Georgia. The Lucky employment agency did not require or request any proof that the aliens had permission to be or work in the United States. The Lucky employment agency also advertised in Asian language newspapers and on the Internet. Lin charged the undocumented aliens a commission and transportation fee to place them in a restaurant or other job site and to drive them there, or in some cases charged the restaurant owners, who deducted the fees from their illegal workers' modest pay.

The Lucky employment agency used paid drivers to minimize contact between the undocumented aliens and the outside world, including law enforcement. Restaurant owners Xiang Mei Ke and Huang Zheng of "Hong Kong Super Buffet" in Buford, Ga., and Jing Xing Jiang, the owner of "Fuji Buffet" in Lawrenceville, Ga., all previously pleaded guilty to hiring illegal workers and were sentenced on Jan. 25. In addition to employing the illegal workers, Zheng and Ke housed four of them in their home while Jiang housed seven illegal workers. Ke received eight months of home confinement and 30 months of probation. Zheng received three months in custody and a year of supervised release. Jiang received five months in home confinement and three years of probation.

U.S. Attorney, Northern District of Georgia, Sally Quillian Yates said, "Many of the workers in this case were underpaid for long work weeks and lived in substandard conditions, after being placed in locations in Atlanta and around the Southeast. Employment agencies that take advantage of the illegal employment trade will pay the price."

"Exploiting others for profit while many of these individuals were vulnerable because they were in a country they were unfamiliar with is despicable," said Brian D. Lamkin, special agent in charge, FBI Atlanta. "The FBI will continue to work with its law enforcement partners in eradicating such businesses that disregard the law and disregard the dignity and rights of others."

A co-defendant in this case, Lucky employment agency driver Shu Xian Jia, 54, of Doraville, is scheduled to be sentenced on April 26 on a charge of transporting illegal aliens.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Susan Coppedge and Phyllis Clerk prosecuted this case.

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