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## News Releases

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APRIL 25, 2011 PITTSBURGH, PA

### **Final defendant in multistate alien harboring and money laundering case sentenced**

PITTSBURGH - A man who owned a company that provided illegal workers to hotels and restaurants in Pittsburgh and three other cities was sentenced Monday to 56 months in federal prison and three years of supervised release, following an investigation by U.S. Immigration and Custom Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI).

Alexander Litt, 47, of Miami, Fla., was one of six people indicted in December 2008 in a multi-state investigation into illegal aliens employed in the hospitality industry. Litt pleaded guilty in September 2010 to charges of conspiracy to harbor illegal aliens for commercial gain and money laundering.

According to court documents, Litt's Cincinnati-based company, ARRA Corporation, provided housekeeping personnel to various hotels in the Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Cleveland and Columbus, Ohio, areas for an eight year period starting in 1998. In addition to the workers being out-of-status foreign nationals, Litt and a co-conspirator received kickbacks of \$1.50 per hour, per employee, for hours they worked.

HSI's investigation into this scheme estimates that more than 100 illegal workers were employed locally by the Pittsburgh franchise of the company, Citiwide Management Group (CMG). During peak season, the employees worked up to 20 hours per day.

The workers, primarily from former Soviet countries, were forced to live together in housing chosen by CMG. They were charged rent for the living arrangements and additional transportation fees to ride to and from the hotels in a company van.

"This investigation is a terrific example of how law enforcement works together, utilizing our combined authorities and resources, to take down a criminal organization that went to great lengths to not only disguise the employment, but the harboring of illegal aliens, in order to make a buck," said John P. Kelleghan, special agent in charge of Philadelphia ICE HSI. "Today's sentencing should send a clear message that those who choose to utilize or harbor a workforce comprised of illegal aliens will be held accountable for their actions."

"This case involved a multi-state money laundering and alien harboring conspiracy, whereby individuals in the Greater Pittsburgh area conspired with other defendants in Ohio to own and operate employee leasing companies through which more than 100 out-of-status alien employees were contracted to their client businesses, primarily as hotel and restaurant workers," said U.S. Attorney Hickton. "The significance of this case lies in the fact that the recruitment and exploitation of cheap alien labor occurs daily around the country. Although investigations of this type are labor intensive, it is incumbent upon us to identify and prosecute those who violate federal civil rights, immigration and tax laws."

"Employment tax evasion is not only a serious crime, but can also impact the individual taxpayer and employee, who may see future benefits such as Social Security, Medicare or Unemployment Compensation reduced or eliminated," said Thomas Jankowski, Special Agent in Charge, IRS-Criminal Investigation Pittsburgh Field Office. "With the recent tax filing season now

in the books, this successful prosecution is a timely reminder how serious Federal Law Enforcement and the Courts are when it comes to tax related violations of the law."

Five other defendants previously pleaded guilty to their roles in the conspiracy and have already been sentenced. They include:

- Yaroslav Rochniak, a/k/a Slava, a/k/a Jerry, 53, of Brooklyn, N.Y., was sentenced on March 3 to 51 months in prison followed by three years supervised release;
- Roman Kucher, 41, of Lakewood, Ohio, was sentenced on April 8, 2010, to 33 months in prison followed by three years supervised release;
- Gregory Kucher, 64, of Brooklyn, N.Y., was sentenced on Nov. 18 to 51 months in prison followed by two year supervised release;
- Yakov Shakhanov, 73, of Delray Beach, Fla., was sentenced on March 25 to 33 months in prison followed by three years of supervised release; and
- Roman Litt, 66, of Staten Island, N.Y., was sentenced on March 1 to 56 months in prison followed by three years of supervised release.

Prior to imposing the sentence, U.S. District Court Judge Terrence F. McVerry stated that it was hard to imagine how Litt, himself an immigrant, could have involved himself in this scheme. He also said that "the aliens lived in undesirable, sometimes deplorable conditions, and Litt did nothing to improve those conditions."

ICE HSI was joined in the investigation by the Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation and the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Inspector General. Assistant U.S. Attorney Margaret E. Picking prosecuted this case on behalf of the government.

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