



U.S. Department of Justice

Seth D. DuCharme
Acting United States Attorney
Eastern District of New York

100 Federal Plaza
Central Islip, New York 11722

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 10, 2020

Contact:
John Marzulli
United States Attorney's Office
(718) 254-6323

PRESS RELEASE

**TWO INDIVIDUALS ARRESTED FOR HUMAN SMUGGLING CONSPIRACY AND
DEFRAUDING U.S. GOVERNMENT AGENCIES**

***Defendants Allegedly Smuggled Vietnamese Aliens into the United States to Work for Illegally
Low Wages at Hair and Nail Salons in New York City and on Long Island***

Earlier today, in federal court in Central Islip, a six-count indictment was unsealed charging Dat Tat Ho and Manh Ngoc Nguyen with conspiring to defraud U.S. government agencies and alien smuggling for financial gain, and related crimes. The defendants were arrested this morning and arraigned this afternoon before United States Magistrate Judge Anne Y. Shields. Both defendants were ordered detained pending trial.

Seth D. DuCharme, Acting United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York; Peter C. Fitzhugh, Special Agent-in-Charge, Homeland Security Investigations, New York (HSI); Jonathan D. Larsen, Special Agent-in-Charge, Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation, New York (IRS-CI); and Michael C. Mikulka, Special Agent-in-Charge, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, New York Region (DOL-OIG), announced the indictment and arrests.

“As alleged, Ho and Nguyen conspired to smuggle aliens into the United States, keep them under the defendants’ control and pay them illegally low wages to work in nail and hair salons,” stated Acting United States Attorney DuCharme. “As this case demonstrates, we take seriously our responsibility to maintain security at our borders and prosecute those who seek unlawful commercial advantage and financial profit through the exploitation of other human beings.”

Mr. DuCharme thanked U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), U.S. Postal Inspection Service, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York, the New York City Police Department, Nassau County Police Department and Suffolk County Police Department for their valuable assistance during the investigation.

“This case is an example of callous labor trafficking hiding in plain sight. In what seemed to be an endless scheme, this transnational criminal organization allegedly manipulated the asylum process and profited off the plight of their nail salon employees whom they victimized,” stated HSI Special Agent-in-Charge Fitzhugh. “HSI, through collaboration with its federal, state and local partners, methodically unraveled the vast reach of this enterprise which led to the indictment of these criminals. It is important for anyone who is a victim of human smuggling to know that these investigations prioritize ensuring the safety of the victims while bringing those responsible to justice.”

“It is reprehensible when others allegedly seek personal financial gain by smuggling persons into the United States and paying them illegally low wages,” stated IRS-CI Special Agent-in-Charge Larsen. “We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to prevent this abuse and protect the financial integrity of our tax system.”

“Combatting labor trafficking is an important part of the mission of the Department of Labor’s Office of Inspector General. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to investigate all forms of labor trafficking,” stated DOL-OIG Special Agent-in-Charge Mikulka.

According to court filings, the defendants owned or managed numerous nail and hair salons in Queens, the Bronx and on Long Island. Between January 2017 and September 2020, the defendants and others arranged for Vietnamese foreign nationals to enter the United States via illegal border crossings at the U.S. border with Mexico, as well as at other ports of entry. After the foreign nationals crossed the border, the defendants facilitated their travel to New York to work in their salons at illegally low wages and overstay their transit visas. The defendants also caused foreign nationals to make false statements to USCIS and submit fraudulent asylum applications to USCIS. The foreign nationals were housed in residences that the defendants owned or controlled.

The charges in the indictment are allegations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty. If convicted, Nguyen and Ho face a minimum of five years’ imprisonment and up to 15 years’ imprisonment.

Assistant United States Attorneys Allen Bode, Charles Rose and Andrew D. Grubin are in charge of the prosecution. Assistant United States Attorney Madeline O’Connor of the Office’s Civil Division is handling forfeiture matters.

The Defendants:

MANH NGOC NGUYEN (also known as “Peter”)

Age: 44

Hicksville, New York

DAT TATHO (also known as “Chris”)

Age: 33

Bronx, New York

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 20-CR-486 (JS)

