

PRESS RELEASE

Woburn Men Sentenced to Prison for Migrant Smuggling Conspiracy

Friday, March 28, 2025

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Massachusetts

BOSTON – Father and son owners of two Woburn, Mass. restaurants, Taste of Brazil—Tudo Na Brasa and The Dog House Bar and Grill, were sentenced yesterday in federal court in Boston for conspiring to smuggle migrants into the United States from Brazil. One defendant was also sentenced for money laundering conspiracy.

Jesse James Moraes, 67, and Hugo Giovanni Moraes, 45, both of Woburn, were sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge Allison D. Burroughs. Jesse Moraes was sentenced to eight months in prison to be followed by three years of supervised release; and Hugo Moraes was sentenced to five months in prison to be followed by three years of supervised release, with the first five months in home confinement, and ordered to pay a \$15,000 fine. In November 2024, the defendants pleaded guilty to conspiring to encourage and induce an alien to come to, enter, and reside in the United States, knowing or in reckless disregard of the fact that such coming to, entry, or residence is or will be in violation of law, for commercial advantage or private financial gain. Jesse Moraes also pleaded guilty to conspiracy to launder the proceeds of the migrant smuggling conspiracy.

The conspiracy involved recruiting undocumented migrants in Brazil to come to the United States through Mexico without authorization in exchange for fees of between \$12,000 and \$22,000 per person. The migrants were encouraged to make fraudulent claims of asylum and familial relationship (e.g., parent and minor child) in the United States and were given fraudulent information about U.S. points of contact to give to immigration authorities when they were caught in the United States. Once migrants were in the United States, Jesse Moraes and Hugo Moraes helped them secure long-term housing, including in apartments owned by relatives of Hugo Moraes. The defendants arranged for some of the migrants to work at Tudo Na Brasa/Taste of Brazil and The Dog House Bar and Grill and paid the migrants either entirely or partly in cash unless and until the migrants obtained identification documents, at which point they would be paid at least partly by check.

The defendants encouraged the migrants working for them to obtain false identification documents and referred them to a co-defendant, Marcos Chacon Gil, a/k/a Marquito," to obtain such false identification documents. The co-conspirators agreed that some of the migrants could pay off some of their smuggling fee once they reached the United States, which they did by direct payment, having their wages withheld, or by collection by relatives and other associates within and outside the United States.

The money laundering conspiracy to which Jesse Moraes was sentenced involved transferring funds into and out of the United States with the intent to promote the migrant smuggling conspiracy and conducting financial transactions with the proceeds of the smuggling conspiracy that were designed to conceal the ownership and control of the proceeds.

United States Attorney Leah B. Foley; Michael J. Krol, Acting Special Agent in Charge for Homeland Security Investigations in New England; Jonathan Mellone, Special Agent in Charge of the Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General; Thomas Demeo, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the Internal Revenue Service's Criminal Investigations in Boston; and Woburn Police Chief Robert F. Rufo, Jr., made the announcement today. Valuable assistance in the investigation was provided by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Enforcement and Removal Operations and the Norwood Police Department. Assistant U.S. Attorneys James D. Herbert, Kelly Lawrence and Samuel R. Feldman of the Criminal Division prosecuted the case.

Updated March 28, 2025

Topic

HUMAN SMUGGLING

Component

[USAO - Massachusetts](#)