

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Missouri

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, July 13, 2015

Florida Business Owners Indicted for Harboring Illegal Aliens as Branson Workers

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Tammy Dickinson, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced today that two Florida men have been indicted by a federal grand jury for harboring illegal aliens working for their labor leasing businesses in Branson, Mo.

Martin Ghambaryan, 29, and Mikayel V. Abrahamyan, 34, both of whom are Armenian nationals and legal permanent residents of the United States residing in Delray Beach, Fla., were charged in an indictment returned by a federal grand jury in Kansas City, Mo., on Wednesday, July 8, 2015.

Ghambaryan incorporated MGM Union, LLC, in Missouri in 2008 and Abrahamyan incorporated Seasonal Labor Solutions, LLC, in Missouri in 2009. Both businesses have Branson addresses. According to today's indictment, Ghambaryan and Abrahamyan allowed other persons to assert de facto control over those businesses and operate them as labor leasing companies that supplied workers to various businesses in and around the Branson area, such as hotels, restaurants, golf courses and entertainment venues.

The federal indictment alleges that Ghambaryan and Abrahamyan, knowingly and in reckless disregard of the fact that aliens were in the United States in violation of law, concealed, harbored, and shielded numerous illegal aliens from detection. The indictment alleges Ghambaryan and Abrahamyan conspired with, and aided and abetted, the de facto operators of MGM and Seasonal Labor Solutions to harbor those illegal aliens and conceal them from detection.

The operators of MGM applied for federal authorization to employ non-citizen workers with H-2B visas (a non-immigrant visa granted to aliens seeking to work in the United States on a temporary or seasonal non-agricultural work basis). MGM's application to employ alien workers with H-2B visas was denied, the indictment says, and MGM never received authorization to employ alien workers with H-2B visas. No one acting on behalf of Seasonal Labor Solutions ever even applied for that authorization, according to the indictment.

Even though MGM and Seasonal Labor Solutions never received legal authorization to employ alien workers with H-2B visas, the indictment says, the operators of those companies routinely employed

alien workers with H-2B visas, thereby placing the alien workers in an illegal employment status and rendering the alien workers subject to deportation for violating the terms and conditions of their visas.

The operators of MGM and Seasonal Labor Solutions allegedly also employed undocumented aliens who were not legally entitled to be in the United States, much less be employed.

These alien workers, whether they were undocumented or had some form of work visa, were typically required to live in certain hotels and apartments in the Branson area, the indictment says, creating a situation where the workers had to make a rent payment to the operators of MGM and Seasonal Labor Solutions. These alien workers also were dependent on the operators of MGM and Seasonal Labor Solutions for transportation to and from their living quarters to their jobs, and were transported in vans provided by their employers.

According to the indictment, workers often ended up owing large debts to the operators of MGM and Seasonal Labor Solutions, which were then deducted from the workers' paychecks, leaving the workers with minimal take home pay.

The operators of MGM and Seasonal Labor Solutions routinely allowed alien workers to remain on the payroll following expiration of a temporary work visa, the indictment says. They allegedly collected fees from the alien workers based on the promise of obtaining extensions of the temporary work visa, but routinely failed to do so, leaving the alien workers in an illegal employment status. The operators of MGM and Seasonal Labor Solutions used the alien workers' illegal employment status, and the threat of potential removal and deportation from the United States, as a way to compel the aliens to continue working.

The federal indictment alleges that Ghambaryan and Abrahamyan, knew, and acted in reckless disregard of the fact that the de facto operators of MGM and Seasonal Labor Solutions routinely employed alien workers with H-2B visas, thereby placing the alien workers in an illegal employment status, and rendering the alien workers subject to deportation for violating the terms and conditions of their visas. The indictment also alleges that Ghambaryan and Abrahamyan, knew, and acted in reckless disregard of the fact that the de facto operators of MGM and Seasonal Labor Solutions also employed undocumented aliens who were not legally entitled to be in the United States, much less be employed.

Between April 27, 2009, and Dec. 28, 2009, the de facto operators of MGM funneled more than \$220,000 into MGM's business checking account to pay the alien workers illegally employed by and harbored by MGM.

Between Jan. 8, 2010, and Nov. 2, 2010, the de facto operators of Seasonal Labor Solutions funneled more than \$490,000 into Seasonal Labor Solutions' business checking account to pay the alien workers illegally employed by and harbored by Seasonal Labor Solutions.

Dickinson cautioned that the charge contained in this indictment is simply an accusation, and not evidence of guilt. Evidence supporting the charge must be presented to a federal trial jury, whose duty is to determine guilt or innocence.

This case is being prosecuted by Criminal Division Chief Gene Porter. It was investigated by the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI). Also participating in the investigation were the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Citizenship and Immigration Services; the U.S. Department of State, IRS-Criminal Investigation and the FBI.

Updated July 13, 2015