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LA: Israeli charged with human-trafficking

Evil Scheme

Mordechai Orian, CEO of manpower firm, suspected of forcing 400 Thai laborers to work on US farms
AP and Ynet

The Israeli head of a labor recruiting company accused of exploiting 400 workers from Thailand and forcing them to work on US farms is under arrest and pleading not guilty.

Los Angeles-based Global Horizons Manpower Inc. CEO Mordechai Orian surrendered Friday in Honolulu, and he entered his not guilty plea in federal court shortly afterward.



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Orian, wearing chains around his ankles in court, is being held at the Honolulu Federal Detention Center until a hearing next week.

The FBI had attempted to arrest Orian at his home in Los Angeles on Thursday. Orian, three of his employees and two Thailand-based recruiters were charged in an indictment Thursday.

The FBI says it is the largest human-trafficking case ever charged in US history.

If he is convicted, Orian faces up to 70 years in prison – the maximum sentence for human-trafficking.

The indictments against Orian and Pranee Tubchumpol, the company's director of international relations, charge them with enticing Thai workers onto planes headed to the US and then confiscating their passports and forcing them into debt, in order to "compel the workers' labor and service through threats to have them arrested, deported or sent back to Thailand, knowing the workers could not pay off their debts if sent home".

The company's aim was to "obtain cheap, compliant labor" from the workers, the indictment adds. The scheme is believed to have been carried out in the period between May of 2004 and September of 2005.

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