



OFFICE OF THE MERCER COUNTY PROSECUTOR

ANGELO J. ONOFRI

Prosecutor

TRACEY McKEOWN

Chief of County Detectives

209 S. Broad Street, 3rd Floor
P.O. Box 8068
Trenton, New Jersey 08650-0068
Phone: (609) 989-6350
mercercountyprosecutor.com

STEPHANIE A. KATZ

First Assistant Prosecutor

MICHAEL J. NOVEMBRE

Deputy Chief of County Detectives

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CONTACT: Casey A. DeBlasio
(609) 989-6379

Lawrence Township Man Indicted for Human Trafficking, Insurance Fraud & Financial Crimes

A Mercer County grand jury recently returned an eight-count indictment charging a 48-year-old Lawrence Township man with human trafficking, insurance fraud and related financial crimes, Mercer County Prosecutor Angelo J. Onofri reported.

The indictment, returned November 12, 2019, charges Chin Pang Liu of Mink Court, Lawrenceville, with one count of first-degree human trafficking, one count of second-degree false contract payment claims, one count of third-degree insurance fraud, three counts of third-degree filing a fraudulent return and two counts of first-degree financial facilitation of criminal activity.

Liu was arrested in November 2018 following a two-year investigation into money laundering, tax evasion, prostitution and human trafficking.

At that time, Onofri said, "This is classic case of people being isolated, exploited and trapped in a forced-labor situation. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to rescue these vulnerable victims and ensure human traffickers face strict punishment."

He also thanked the public and asked citizens to remain vigilant and report suspicious activity to the local police department. "Residents are our eyes and ears, and continue to be a valuable asset to public safety. They are often the first to recognize something is wrong and alert us so we can investigate."

According to Onofri, the investigation was initiated in September 2016 when the Lawrence Township Police Department received a tip from a resident regarding many people living in a home on Lakedale Drive in Lawrence and reached out to the Mercer County Prosecutor's Economic Crime Unit (ECU).

During the course of multiple surveillances during the investigation, detectives observed numerous different men and women being transported from a residence on Lakedale Drive in Lawrence to restaurants in Lawrence and Yardley, Pennsylvania. Subsequent investigation revealed that Chin Pang Liu was the owner of the house as well as the principal owner of Fusion House on Brunswick Pike, Lawrence, and Golden China Restaurant on Floral Vale Boulevard, Yardley, and that he was transporting workers back and forth. It also revealed that those individuals housed on Lakedale Drive were employed by Liu at his restaurants and that their employment was committed by fraud. Specifically, the employees were being paid below New Jersey state minimum wage requirements, under the table without being taxed, and the full-time employees received no employment benefits. The workers were being transported in vehicles bought and provided by Liu.

During the execution of a search warrant at Liu's primary residence on Mink Court in Lawrenceville, large sums of packaged U.S. currency were discovered and seized, totaling approximately \$50,000. A review of Liu's 2016 personal tax documents indicated that he reported an income of approximately \$100,000 for that year. Financial documents and cash seized during the execution of the search warrants corroborated that Liu failed to report a significant portion of his income.

The human trafficking charge is a first-degree offense, carrying a sentence of 20 years without parole to life in prison and a fine of up to \$200,000 if convicted.

The indictment is the result of an investigation lead by Detective Sean Kerins of the Lawrence Township Police Department and Detective David Petelle of the Mercer County Prosecutor's Economic Crime Unit. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant Prosecutor Rachel Cook, chief of the ECU.

Onofri credited the outstanding investigative work of Detectives Kerins and Petelle, and thanked the following agencies and all of their members who provided support and resources:

- Lawrence Township Police Department
- Mercer County Prosecutor's Office Homicide Task Force, Special Investigations Unit and Special Victims Unit
- Mercer County Tactical Response Team
- Mercer County Sheriff's Office

- New Jersey State Police
- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
- U.S. Homeland Security Investigations/Enforcement Removal Operations
- New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness
- New Jersey Division of Taxation
- New Jersey Department of the Treasury
- U.S. Marshals Service NY/NJ Regional Fugitive Task Force
- Bucks County District Attorney's Office

Despite having been indicted, every defendant is presumed innocent until found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

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