



## U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

### **HSI Norfolk investigation leads to Virginia business owner admitting to money laundering, conspiracy involving labor trafficking**

FEBRUARY 6, 2023-NEWPORT NEWS, VA - HUMAN SMUGGLING/TRAFFICKING, LABOR EXPLOITATION, FINANCIAL CRIMES

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. — A Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Norfolk investigation led to a guilty plea from a Midlothian, Virginia man Jan. 31 for conspiring to defraud and commit offenses against the United States, including human trafficking of individuals from Central America; benefiting from forced labor; money laundering; and harboring undocumented non-citizens.

According to the HSI Norfolk investigation, George William Evans, 68, participated in a conspiracy to harbor, transport, and benefit from the employment of undocumented noncitizens at the commercial laundry business he co-owned.

“George William Evans, like most human traffickers, took advantage of members of a vulnerable population for his own personal profit,” said acting Special Agent in Charge Derek W. Gordon of HSI Washington. “HSI Washington will continue to exhaust every measure available to us in order to ensure that predators like Evans cannot operate freely in our communities, preying on the people that we have sworn to protect.”

Evans owned 50% of a commercial laundry business called Northstar Holdings of Virginia, LLC, doing business as Magnolia Cleaning Services, LLC.

Between the first quarter of 2018 and the first quarter of 2022, the business's wage records reflect approximately 121 employees with alleged invalid or mismatched Social Security numbers and wage payments of more than \$1.2 million to these employees.

At Evans' and his co-conspirators' direction, Magnolia Cleaning Services exploited undocumented noncitizens by making them work long hours in poor working conditions. In some cases, the conspirators threatened their victims with deportation, physical harm and harm to their families if they refused to work as directed.

Some undocumented employees lived in the laundry facility without access to a kitchen or bathroom with a shower or bathtub. One employee was a child who was made to work night shifts while attending school during the day.

Evans pleaded guilty to conspiring to defraud and commit offenses against the United States and engaging in a transaction in criminally derived property. He agreed to forfeit an amount not less than \$3,938,630 to the United States. Evans agreed to forfeit \$1,969,315 no later than 30 days before his sentencing, which is scheduled for June 20, 2023.

Evans faces a maximum penalty of five years in prison for the conspiracy offense and 10 years in prison for the money laundering offense.

This Hampton Roads Human Trafficking Task Force investigation was conducted by HSI Norfolk with significant assistance from the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Virginia; the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of the Inspector General in Washington, D.C.; the Social Security Administration's Office of the Inspector General; and the Washington Division of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

The Hampton Roads Human Trafficking Task Force is a collaboration between federal, state and local law enforcement and prosecutors, as well as nongovernmental organizations, working together to combat human trafficking in the Hampton Roads, Virginia region.

Anyone with information regarding human trafficking or child exploitation is encouraged to provide their tips to law enforcement. Homeland Security Investigations has a nationwide tipline that members of the public can call to report what they know. You can reach HSI at 866-DHS-2423. The HSI tipline is manned 24 hours a day.

HSI is the principal investigative arm of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), responsible for investigating transnational crime and threats, specifically those criminal organizations that exploit the global infrastructure through which international trade, travel, and finance move. HSI's workforce of more than 8,700 employees consists of more than 6,000 special agents assigned to 237 cities throughout the United States, and 93 overseas locations in 56 countries. HSI's international presence represents DHS's largest investigative law enforcement presence abroad and one of the largest international footprints in U.S. law enforcement.

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