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San Francisco Brothel Owner Pleads Guilty to Money Laundering

November 11, 2006 12:00 AM EST

by Jim Kouri - SAN FRANCISCO -- A Bay Area brothel owner faces up to 20 years in prison after pleading guilty to one count of money laundering for his role in a large-scale human smuggling and prostitution scheme uncovered during a multi-agency investigation known as Operation Gilded Cage.

Anthony Gar Lau, 46, of San Bruno, entered his plea Friday and agreed to forfeit \$1 million to the government, the amount he acknowledged earning from his alien harboring activities as the owner of a brothel called the Golden Flower Steam and Sauna Spa.

Lau is among the more than two dozen defendants charged in connection with Operation Gilded Cage, a massive investigation involving U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the San Francisco Police Department, the Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation, and the State Department's Diplomatic Security Service.

Investigators say Lau and his partners in the Golden Flower Spa employed illegal alien women as prostitutes and used the funds generated by harboring the women to pay the brothel's operating expenses. Lau was indicted by a federal grand jury in March. He is scheduled to be sentenced March 7, 2007.

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