

Woman guilty in immigration fraud

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NORFOLK

A federal court jury Monday convicted a Jamaican woman for her role in an international immigration fraud ring that brought hundreds of illegal workers into the country.

After an eight-day trial, the jury in U.S. District Court found Clover May Robinson-Gordon, 44, guilty of one count of conspiracy and five counts of money laundering.

The jury acquitted her husband, O'Brian Barrington Gordon, 57, of the same charges.

Robinson-Gordon operated her own labor brokerage business based in Florida. Her husband worked in a machine shop and was not directly connected to his wife's company, his lawyer said.

The jury found that Robinson-Gordon conspired with the Viktor Krus organization to bring in workers that were sent to jobs they were not authorized to work at. For example, Robinson-Gordon would request work visas for immigrants to be placed at Hampton Roads hotels and restaurants, but when the workers arrived they would illegally be diverted to jobs in other states, according to the indictment against her.

The money-laundering counts stem from about \$50,000 in payments that Robinson-Gordon sent to Jamaica to secure the workers, the indictment says.

Attorneys for the couple argued that they had no knowledge the workers were diverted for illegal means. The jury apparently believed the husband but not the wife.

"We were just grateful that the jury recognized that he just did not know what was going on," said Gordon's attorney, James Theuer of Norfolk. "He's very disappointed they didn't believe his wife. She did not know what they were up to."

In a related case Monday, Alexis Starkes of Toano, a former human-resources manager at the Williamsburg Crowne Plaza hotel, was sentenced to three years of probation after pleading guilty to mail fraud. She admitted in federal court that she accepted a bribe from one of the ring members in exchange for inflating the number of workers the hotel actually needed.

Federal agents from the Internal Revenue Service, Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement and other agencies have spent years dismantling the ring, which is thought to have ties to Eastern European organized crime.