



# PRESS RELEASE

## Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation *Chief Richard Weber*

Date: April 26, 2017

Contact: \*CI-HQ-COMMUNICATIONSEUCATION@ci.irs.gov  
IRS – Criminal Investigation

CI Release #: CI-2017-04-26-D

### **Northern California Restaurant Owner Sentenced to Prison for Obstructing the Tax Laws and Harboring Illegal Aliens for Profit**

A Ukiah, California restaurateur was sentenced to serve 24 months in prison today for corruptly endeavoring to obstruct the internal revenue laws and harboring illegal aliens for profit, announced Acting Deputy Assistant Attorney General Stuart M. Goldberg of the Justice Department's Tax Division and U.S. Attorney Brian J. Stretch for the Northern District of California.

According to documents filed with the court, Yaowapha Ritdet, 56, hired Thai nationals who were illegally present in the United States to work at her restaurants, Ruen Tong Thai Cuisine and Walter Café, both located in Ukiah. Ritdet underpaid these employees and instructed them not to speak to anyone about their immigration status. Ritdet also paid her employees in cash and did not pay employment taxes on the cash wages.

Ritdet filed false individual income tax returns for 2007 through 2011 that underreported the gross receipts, sales, and income she received from her two restaurants, and failed to report rental income and a foreign bank account she held in Thailand.

In addition to the term of prison imposed, Ritdet was ordered to serve three years of supervised release and to pay approximately \$567,755.65 in restitution to include \$70,768.65 to underpaid employees and \$496,987 to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Ritdet pleaded guilty in August 2016.

Acting Deputy Assistant Attorney General Goldberg and U.S. Attorney Stretch thanked special agents of IRS–Criminal Investigation and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations, who conducted the investigation, and the U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division, which identified the underpayment of wages and overtime, and Trial Attorney Charles O'Reilly of the Tax Division and Assistant U.S. Attorney José A Olivera, who prosecuted the case.

###