



Press Release

Taiwan Yilan District Prosecutors Office

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Safeguarding Border Security and Preventing Humanitarian Tragedies 24 Vietnamese Migrants Rescued at Sea After Being Threatened and Extorted by Human Smuggling Ring Yilan District Prosecutors Office Indicts the Largest Maritime Human Trafficking Case in Recent Times

Prosecutor Yeh Yi-Tsai of the Yilan District Prosecutors Office directed a coordinated investigation involving the Investigation Branch of the Coast Guard Administration (units from Yilan, Tainan, and Kaohsiung), the 5th and 8th Flotillas and the Southern Mobile Sea Patrol Unit, as well as specialized Special Bregades of the National Immigration Agency from Yilan, Changhua, and Pingtung. After intensive intelligence gathering, on April 25, 2025 at around 17:00, authorities intercepted a major human smuggling operation 9.3 nautical miles off Taiwan's territorial baseline. A smuggling ring led by two brothers surnamed Lee was caught transporting 24 Vietnamese nationals via a fishing vessel in an attempt to illegally enter Taiwan—marking the largest maritime human trafficking case in recent months.

Following an in-depth investigation, Prosecutor Yeh personally interviewed the 24 Vietnamese nationals at the Yilan Immigration Detention Center. The court approved detention of the Lee brothers, a suspect surnamed Lo, and a Vietnamese national identified as Nguyen o Thanh. The investigation concluded on August 22, 2025, with indictments filed for violations of the Immigration Act, Human Trafficking Prevention Act, and the Organized Crime Prevention Act. The prosecution has also

requested the court to confiscate illegal proceeds totaling NT\$9.6 million, along with the seizure of the vessel "*Jin 00 No. 8*", five mobile phones, and two satellite phones as tools used in the crime. The 24 Vietnamese nationals were referred for summary judgment under immigration law for illegal entry.

Prosecutors highlighted the smuggling ring's exploitation of the migrants, extorting an additional NT\$150,000 from each of them by threatening to throw them overboard if they failed to pay—on top of the initial NT\$250,000 each had already paid. This brought the total illicit proceeds to NT\$9.6 million. The traffickers exploited the migrants' vulnerable position—isolated at sea with no support or protection.

The indictment states that the smuggling ring was composed of the Lee brothers, Lo, and Vietnamese nationals Nguyen O Thanh and Nguyen O Nhi (currently wanted). In April 2025, Nguyen O Nhi recruited 24 Vietnamese nationals who sought to work in Taiwan but lacked legal entry permits. After collecting NT\$250,000 from each, the group arranged for the Taiwan-flagged fishing vessel "*Jin 00 No. 8*" to travel to Vietnam to pick them up. Transfers were made at sea via smaller fishing boats to evade detection. The Lee brothers and accomplices took advantage of the migrants' helpless state, demanding additional payments and making threats that any refusal would result in them being thrown into the sea.

With actionable intelligence, the task force employed advanced surveillance technology and radar systems to monitor the vessel's movements. Naval units were dispatched to intercept the ship, resulting in the arrest of the captain, four crew members, and the 24 Vietnamese nationals on board. The operation successfully prevented illegal entry and a potential humanitarian disaster. The vessel, mobile phones, and satellite phones were seized on-site.

The Yilan District Prosecutors Office emphasized that illegal immigration severely undermines Taiwan's border control and national security, repeatedly leading to human rights violations and, at times, irreversible

tragedies. The office remains committed to cracking down on human trafficking, preventing such crimes beyond the border, protecting victims, safeguarding national security, and upholding democratic and humanitarian values.