

News Releases

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ICE arrests more than 160 employees at a Houston rag-exporting company

HOUSTON - As part of its ongoing enforcement efforts to investigate worksites allegedly hiring illegal aliens, U. S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) executed a federal search warrant today at a Houston used clothing and rag-exporting company.

ICE arrested more than 160 Action Rags USA employees for administrative immigration violations. Action Rags USA is an international supplier of used clothing and rags. Today's enforcement action is part of a more than a year-long ongoing investigation

"ICE worksite enforcement investigations unfold in multiple stages. Our ICE agents will follow the evidence and information gathered from this operation to determine if there are other violations of the law," said Robert Rutt, special agent in charge for ICE's Office of Investigations in Houston.

The individuals arrested today are from Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

Everyone detained has been interviewed by ICE agents and the Division of Immigration Health Services to determine if they have medical, caregiver, or other humanitarian issues. So far, ICE has identified approximately 60 individuals who may qualify for a humanitarian release. However, these individuals are still required to appear before a federal immigration judge who will ultimately determine whether they have a legal right to remain in the United States.

"ICE remains committed to the safe and humane treatment of detainees within our custody," said Kennneth Landgrebe, field office director for ICE's Office of Detention and Removal Operations in Houston. "The United States welcomes law abiding immigrants; however, those without a valid status may face the consequences of being arrested and ultimately deported."

A 24-hour toll-free hotline has been established for family members to find out more information about the detention status of those arrested today. The toll-free phone number is: 1-866-341-3858. Additionally, ICE has contacted local community groups and foreign consular offices to provide accurate information about the operation.

ICE has significantly enhanced its efforts to combat the unlawful employment of illegal aliens and to target employers who knowingly hire and harbor illegal aliens. As of May 2008, ICE has made more than 2,900 administrative arrests in connection with worksite enforcement investigations, including more than 850 criminal arrests. In fiscal year 2007, ICE secured more than \$30 million in criminal fines, restitutions, seizures and civil judgments as a result of worksite related enforcement actions. More than 4,000 administrative arrests were made, along with 863 arrests for criminal violations.

-- ICE --

U.S. Immigration and Customs
Enforcement (ICE) was established in
March 2003 as the largest investigative arm
of the Department of Homeland Security.
ICE is comprised of five integrated
divisions that form a 21st century law
enforcement agency with broad
responsibilities for a number of key
homeland security priorities.

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