



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

News Releases

August 12, 2008

ICE arrests 59 illegal aliens employed by Asheville Department of Defense contractor

ASHEVILLE, NC - Fifty-nine illegal aliens working at Mills Manufacturing Corporation (MMC) were arrested here this morning by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) special agents.

The arrests were based on an ICE critical infrastructure investigation that revealed that the illegal aliens had used fraudulent social security numbers to obtain employment. The company, located at 22 Mills Place, has been fully cooperative and is not a target of the ICE investigation.

MMC is a Department of Defense contractor responsible for the manufacturing of parachutes for the U.S. military. Illegal aliens employed at sensitive facilities -- such as military bases, nuclear plants, chemical plants, airports and Department of Defense contractors -- pose a homeland security threat.

ICE doesn't believe that those arrested today at MMC had any ill intent against the United States; however, their illegal status could have made them susceptible to blackmail by those with ill intent. Today, ICE has neutralized a potential vulnerability.

"Protecting the integrity of our nation's critical infrastructure is among ICE's highest priorities," said Delbert Richburg, assistant special agent-in-charge of the ICE Office of Investigations in Charlotte. "When individuals use fraudulent social security numbers to get jobs, they hide their true identity and history. We need to know who is working on our critical infrastructure sites."

All of those arrested today were transferred to the Henderson County Sheriff's Office for immigration processing. All have been placed into removal proceedings for being in violation of U.S. immigration law.

At this point, no criminal charges have been presented against the illegal aliens; however, the investigation continues.

Those arrested today were interviewed by ICE agents to determine if they had medical, caregiver, or other humanitarian issues. ICE identified approximately 29 individuals who qualified for a

humanitarian release. These individuals are still required to appear before a federal immigration judge who will ultimately determine whether or not they will be deported.

Among those arrested, were nationals of Mexico, Guatemala, Ecuador and Honduras. ICE contacted local Consular officials, community groups and other to provide accurate information regarding today's operation.

Family members wanting information regarding those arrested today may contact ICE by dialing 704-679-6140.

ICE's worksite enforcement investigations are aimed at promoting national security and public safety, protecting critical infrastructure, and ensuring fair labor standards. As of July 2008, ICE has made more than 3,800 administrative arrests for immigration violations during worksite enforcement operations.

-- 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.

Last Modified: Tuesday, August 12, 2008