

## **U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement**

## **News Releases**

February 24, 2009

## 28 illegal workers at Bellingham company arrested in ICE operation

BELLINGHAM, Wash. - U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents arrested 28 foreign nationals this morning on administrative immigration violations at a local engine manufacturing company.

The illegal workers, who were employed at Yamato Engine Specialists in Bellingham, Wash., will be placed in deportation proceedings. The arrests are part of an ongoing ICE worksite enforcement investigation.

The illegal alien workers encountered by ICE at the plant include 25 males (22 Mexican nationals, one Salvadoran, one Guatemalan and one Honduran) and three females (all Mexican nationals). The individuals were fingerprinted, photographed and interviewed by ICE agents to determine if they had any medical, caregiver or other humanitarian issues. The interviews help ICE decide whether an individual will remain in ICE custody or be eligible for an alternative to detention based on humanitarian factors while they await a hearing before a federal immigration judge. As a result of those interviews, three of the illegal aliens identified at the plant were processed and released on humanitarian grounds. The individuals who remain in ICE custody are being held at the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, Wash.

ICE initiated this investigation following the arrest of a criminal illegal alien who had previously worked at Yamato Engines. Further investigation of the company's hiring records revealed that some of the workers may have obtained employment using false Social Security numbers and other counterfeit identity documents.

"The lure of jobs in the United States continues to be one of the primary factors fueling illegal immigration," said Leigh Winchell, special agent in charge of the ICE Office of Investigations in Seattle. "ICE remains committed to investigating cases where the evidence shows employment laws are being violated."

Since its establishment in 2003, ICE has dramatically enhanced its efforts to combat the unlawful

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