



# Department of Justice

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## U.S. IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT



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### **595 ARRESTED IN ICE AND DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE JOINT IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT ACTION INITIATED AT MISSISSIPPI TRANSFORMER MANUFACTURING FACILITY**

#### **Approximately 106 Identified With Humanitarian Issues, Eight Charged Criminally**

LAUREL, Miss.— U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) special agents executed a federal criminal search warrant yesterday at Howard Industries, Inc., an electric transformer manufacturing facility, for evidence relating to aggravated identity theft, fraudulent use of Social Security numbers and other crimes, as well as a civil search warrant for individuals illegally in the United States.

The announcement was made by ICE Special Agent in Charge of the Office of Investigations in New Orleans, Michael A. Holt, and Stan Harris, First Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Mississippi.

As a result of yesterday's enforcement action, approximately 595 illegal aliens were arrested by ICE special agents. Of those, approximately 106 were identified as being eligible for an alternative to detention based on humanitarian reasons. These individuals will still be required to appear before a federal immigration judge who will ultimately determine whether or not they will be deported.

Eight criminal cases have been accepted for prosecution by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Mississippi. The criminal cases are focused on charges of aggravated identity theft. The other cases are being handled via administrative law procedures at the Department of Homeland Security.

"Yesterday's enforcement action is part of ICE's ongoing nationwide effort to shut down the employment magnet fueling illegal immigration," said Holt. "We are committed to strengthening the integrity of our nation's immigration system."

Harris noted that the eight cases being criminally prosecuted are for separate identity theft charges. "Identity theft is a growing problem in the United States, and the Department of Justice has prioritized bringing perpetrators of these crimes to justice and protecting the interests of innocent victims."

All of those arrested were interviewed, fingerprinted and photographed by ICE agents and processed for removal from the United States. Approximately 475 were transported to an ICE facility in Jena, Louisiana where they will await the outcome of their case. The eight individuals facing criminal charges are in the custody of the U.S. Marshal's Service.

Everyone encountered was medically screened and interviewed by a Public Health Service officer to determine if they had any medical, caregiver, or other humanitarian concerns. As a result of this screening, ICE identified individuals eligible for humanitarian release and nine unaccompanied juveniles who are all 17-years-old. The juveniles, which included one female and eight males, were transferred into the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR).

Those arrested yesterday represent numerous countries including: Germany, Peru, Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama, Honduras and Brazil.

ICE contacted local Consular officials, community groups and others to ensure they have accurate information regarding the operation.

ICE has established a local telephone number for family members to find out more information about the detention status of those arrested. Family members may call: 1-866-341-3858.

The investigation into this case continues.

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