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APRIL 1, 2013 KANSAS CITY, KS

Kansas City construction company owners indicted for money laundering, harboring illegal aliens

KANSAS CITY, Kan. — The owners and managers of a construction framing company in Spring Hill, Kan., were indicted in federal court Monday and charged with a wide variety of criminal violations related to hiring and harboring illegal aliens for the company.

These indictments resulted from an investigation led by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), in conjunction with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), the Clay County, Mo., Sheriff's Office (CCSO), and the Johnson County, Kan., Sheriff's Office (JCSO).

The indictment alleges that Advantage Framing Systems Inc., of Spring Hill, Kan., knowingly employed illegal aliens to obtain commercial advantage and private financial gain. The company issued checks to illegal alien crew leaders, who in turn cashed those checks and paid their illegal alien crew members in cash.

"The indictment alleges the defendants devised a scheme to lower their operating costs and boost their profits by employing undocumented workers," said U.S. Attorney Barry Grissom. "The company did not pay for Social Security, workers compensation or unemployment insurance benefits for those employees."

Advantage Framing provided local builders and contractors with engineered flooring, pre-built wall panels and roof truss systems, along with onsite labor. The company had two components: Advantage Framing Systems Inc., the umbrella for the company's framing and trucking services, and Advantage Component Systems Inc., which carries out the equipment, lumber, inventory and design functions.

The following defendants are charged in the indictment:

- James Humbert, 44, owner of Advantage Framing, is charged with the following crimes: one count of conspiracy to harbor illegal aliens for commercial advantage and private financial gain, 11 counts of harboring illegal aliens, one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering, and 18 counts of money laundering.
- Kimberly Humbert, 46, wife of James Humbert and co-owner of Advantage framing, is charged with the following crimes: one count of conspiracy to harbor illegal aliens for commercial advantage and private financial gain, 11 counts of harboring illegal aliens, one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering, and 18 counts of money laundering.
- Charles Stevens II, 50, brother of Kimberly Humbert and part-owner of Advantage Framing, is charged with the following crimes: one count of conspiracy to harbor illegal aliens for commercial advantage and private financial gain, 11 counts of harboring illegal aliens, one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering and 18 counts of money laundering.
- Jose Ramon Caro-Corral, 57, a crew leader for the company, is charged with the following crimes: one count of conspiracy to harbor illegal aliens for commercial advantage and private financial gain, 11 counts of harboring illegal aliens, one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering, and two counts of money laundering.
- Angel Arguello-Plata, 30, a crew leader for the company, is charged with the following crimes: one count of conspiracy to harbor illegal aliens for commercial advantage and private financial gain, 11 counts of harboring illegal aliens, one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering, and two counts of money laundering.
- Dennis Erickson Portillo, 29, a crew leader for the company, is charged with the following crimes: one count of conspiracy to harbor illegal aliens for commercial advantage and private financial gain, 11 counts of harboring illegal aliens, one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering, and two counts of money laundering.
- Jorge Uriel Delgado-Ovalle, 32, a crew leader for the company, is charged with the following crimes: one count of conspiracy to harbor illegal aliens for commercial advantage and private financial gain, 11 counts of harboring illegal aliens, one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering, and two counts of money laundering.
- The company Advantage Framing System Inc. is charged with the following crimes: one count of conspiracy to harbor illegal aliens for commercial advantage and private financial gain, 11 counts of

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harboring illegal aliens, one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering, and 18 counts of money laundering.

The indictment alleges James and Kimberly Humbert, Charles Stevens and the company itself were responsible for hiring undocumented workers to lower the company's operating costs. The wages the company paid did not include the employer's share of Social Security payments, workers compensation, or unemployment insurance benefits paid to lawfully employed workers in the construction industry. They placed themselves at a competitive advantage to other builders who employed legal workers.

The investigation began in March 2012 when criminal investigators with both HSI and CCSO received information the owners of Advantage Framing employed illegal alien workers. To pay the aliens, the company relied on a method in which a few illegal aliens served as crew leaders. These crew leaders obtained proof of insurance coverage and then received checks from the company which were then used to pay the other illegal aliens. Kimberly Humbert served as the point of contact for the framing crews for obtaining the required liability insurance.

At the beginning of the investigation in March 2012, Advantage employed between 25 and 30 crews consisting of five or six workers per crew.

Advantage required crew leaders to attend safety training meetings at their main office. In addition to safety, they also instructed how to react if investigators from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) conducted a site inspection. Workers were instructed to tell OSHA they worked for a sub-contractor and not directly for Advantage.

The indictment further alleges that James and Kimberly Humbert practiced reaction drills in case immigration officials visited to the business. They remarked that the "white guys would have no clue what to do while everyone else ran and hid."

Upon conviction, the aforementioned alleged crimes carry the following penalties:

- Conspiracy to harbor illegal aliens: A maximum penalty of five years in federal prison and a fine up to \$250,000.
- Harboring illegal aliens: A maximum penalty of five years and a fine up to \$250,000 on each count.
- Conspiracy to commit money laundering: A maximum penalty of 20 years and a fine up to \$250,000.
- Money laundering: A maximum penalty of 20 years and a fine up to \$250,000 on each count.

In all cases, defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty. The indictments merely contain allegations of criminal conduct.

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