



News Releases

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ICE arrests 32 in operation targeting illegal workers at Puget Sound-area aerospace manufacturer

ARLINGTON, Wash. - U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents executed a federal civil search warrant this morning at an aircraft manufacturing plant here, arresting 32 of the company's workers on administrative immigration violations.

The search warrant was executed at Aerospace Manufacturing Technologies, Inc. (AMT), a leading supplier of frame and interior parts for commercial and military aircraft. AMT provides many of the parts used in some of aviation's most popular airplanes, including the Boeing 737 and Boeing 777.

Today's operation is part of ICE's worksite enforcement effort focusing on critical infrastructure and security sensitive sites. AMT is registered with the U.S. Department of State's Director of Defense Trade Controls, which oversees the export and import of certain products that can be used for national defense purposes.

The unauthorized workers included foreign nationals from two countries - Mexico (30) and El Salvador (2). The group includes 16 men and 16 women.

All of those arrested today are being interviewed, fingerprinted and photographed by ICE agents and processed for removal from the United States. Information obtained during the interviews assists ICE in making decisions about whether to detain an individual or permit a conditional humanitarian release. As a result of those interviews, four of the illegal workers, all female, were released initially on humanitarian grounds, pending future immigration proceedings. The 28 workers remaining in ICE custody will be held at the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, Wash.

Today's enforcement action comes after ICE agents audited the employment records of AMT. The audit revealed discrepancies leading agents to believe that a small percentage of the company's employees used counterfeit documents to secure their jobs. At this time, there is no evidence AMT was aware the arrested workers had used false credentials to secure their employment. The investigation is ongoing.

"Today's enforcement action is part of ICE's ongoing nationwide effort to shut down the employment magnet fueling illegal immigration," said Leigh Winchell, special agent in charge of ICE's office of investigations in Seattle. "Every job held by an illegal alien is a job taken from a U.S citizen or legal resident of this area."

ICE has set up a local phone number family members of the arrested workers can call with questions about their relative's detention status and the removal process. The phone number is: 206-553-5657.

Since ICE was created in March 2003, the agency has dramatically enhanced its efforts to combat illegal aliens unlawfully working in the United States. So far in fiscal year 2008, ICE has made more than 3,700 administrative immigration arrests in connection with worksite enforcement investigations, including 850 involving criminal violations. In fiscal year 2007, ICE made more than 4,900 arrests in connection with worksite enforcement investigations, including 863 involving criminal violations.

To help employers ensure that they are building a legal workforce through voluntary partnerships with the government, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security announced a new initiative called the ICE Mutual Agreement between Government and Employers or IMAGE. IMAGE is designed to build cooperative relationships between government and businesses, to strengthen hiring practices, and to reduce unlawfully employing illegal aliens. The initiative also seeks to accomplish greater industry compliance and corporate due diligence through enhanced federal training and education of employers. ICE strongly encourages employers to review IMAGE program materials available at www.ICE.gov.

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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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