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U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

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News Releases

September 27, 2010 SHARE

ICE nabs Puerto Rican couple for bribery

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico - Juan De Miguel-Rodríguez, 45, and Maria Geraldine Espinal-Espinal, 41, were arrested on bribery charges Friday in San Juan and Trujillo Alto, respectively, following an investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Office of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and Office Professional Responsibility (OPR) special agents.

According to the criminal complaint filed Sept. 24, Juan De Miguel-Rodríguez and Maria Geraldine Espinal-Espinal offered and paid $10,000 to an ICE officer in order to reduce any possible fines or to terminate an employment eligibility verification form I-9 (Form I-9) audit conducted by ICE at Casa Mallorca Bakery, Casa Mallorca del Roble, and Casa Mallorkin Sports Bar, all businesses of De Miguel-Rodriguez. If convicted, De Miguel-Rodriguez and Espinal-Espinal face a sentence of up to 15 years in prison and fines of up to $30,000.

The worksite enforcement investigation targeting De Miguel-Rodriguez' businesses began in 2008 after ICE special agents received information that he was knowingly hiring illegal aliens at his Casa Mallorca Bakery business.

ICE HSI and OPR special agents were able to corroborate this information during the course of the investigation and on Nov. 9, 2009, De Miguel-Rodriguez and Espinal-Espinal paid $10,000 to an ICE undercover agent for the purpose of dismissing or significantly reducing the fine of the Form I-9 inspection.

On Nov. 6, 1986, the enactment of the Immigration Reform and Control Act required employers to verify the identity and employment eligibility of their employees and created criminal and civil sanctions for employment related violations. The law requires employers to verify the identity and employment eligibility of all individuals hired in the United States and designates the employment eligibility verification Form I-9 as the means of documenting this verification. Employers are required by law to maintain for inspection original Forms I-9 for all current employees. In the case of former employees, retention of Forms I-9 are required for a period of at least three years from the date of hire or for one year after the employee is no longer employed, whichever is longer.

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The administrative inspection process is initiated by the service of a Notice of Inspection (NOI) upon an employer compelling the production of Forms I-9. When technical or procedural violations are found, an employer is given ten business days to make corrections. An employer may receive a monetary fine for all substantive and uncorrected technical violations. Employers determined to have knowingly hired or continued to employ unauthorized workers will be required to cease the unlawful activity, may be fined, and in certain situations may be prosecuted criminally. Additionally, an employer found to have knowingly hired or continued to employ unauthorized workers may be subject to debarment by ICE, meaning that the employer will be prevented from participating in future federal contracts and from receiving other government benefits. Monetary penalties for knowingly hiring and continuing to employ violations range from $375 to $16,000 per violation, with repeat offenders receiving penalties at the higher end.

For the most up-to-date ICE information, sign up (http://www.ice.gov/exec/leaving.asp?url=https://service.govdelivery.com/service/multi_subscribe.html?code=USDHSICE) for ICE e-mail alerts. You may also visit us on Twitter (http://www.ice.gov/exec/leaving.asp?url=http://twitter.com/wwwicegov) and YouTube (http://www.ice.gov/exec/leaving.asp?url=http://www.youtube.com/wwwicegov) .

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U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.

ICE is a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities. For more information, visit www.ICE.gov. To report suspicious activity, call 1-866-347-2423.

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