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News Releases

APRIL 13, 2011 SAVANNAH, GA

Savannah area McDonald's employees indicted for conspiring to sell stolen identities

SAVANNAH, Ga. - A federal indictment, unsealed today in federal court, charged Oscar Lazo, 51, a citizen of Peru; Eva Ramos, 35, a citizen of the United States; Mauricio Cruz, a citizen of Mexico; Manuel Cruz, a citizen of Mexico; and an unnamed defendant with conspiring to sell the stolen identities of U.S. citizens.

The charges follow an extensive undercover investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) special agents in Savannah.

The indictment alleges that beginning in July of 2010, Lazo and Ramos, both managers of a local McDonald's restaurant owned by NTG Enterprises, sold stolen identities to other prospective McDonald's employees, including Mauricio Cruz and Manuel Cruz, who used the stolen identities to obtain employment with the restaurant.

Lazo and Ramos were also charged with harboring illegal aliens.

All five were arrested on criminal charges today by ICE HSI special agents in Savannah. Nine others were arrested administratively for being in violation of U.S. immigration law.

"ICE HSI aggressively targets the criminal networks that use stolen identities and document fraud to skirt U.S. immigration laws and conspire to hire an illegal alien workforce," said Brock Nicholson, special agent in charge of ICE HSI in Atlanta. "This type of illegal activity compromises the integrity of our nation's immigration system, putting the security of our communities, and our country, at risk."

U.S. Attorney, Southern District of Georgia, Edward J. Tarver said, "Our office will work with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to protect unknowing United States citizens against identity theft which is a rapidly growing problem across our country. Victims of identity fraud suffer a great deal and the effects of such fraud can be long-lasting if not indefinite."

If convicted on all counts, Lazo and Ramos face a maximum statutory penalty of over 100 years in prison. If convicted on all the counts of which they are charged, Mauricio Cruz and Manuel Cruz face a maximum statutory penalty of 37 years in prison.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Natalie Lee is prosecuting the case for the United States.

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

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