



Department of Justice

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Indictments and Search Warrants Target Criminal Violations by Staffing Firm for Portland Fruit and Vegetable Processing Plant

Portland, Ore. – U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents executed arrest warrants and search warrants this morning at three Portland locations as part of an ongoing investigation into alleged criminal violations by employees of a national staffing firm that recruits and hires workers for the fruit and vegetable processing plant operated by Fresh Del Monte Produce in Portland. As part of the criminal investigation, a federal grand jury in Portland has returned indictments against three individuals alleging immigration, document fraud, and identity theft offenses. The names of the defendants are not being released pending their arrests.

The searches occurred at two local offices of American Staffing Resources, Inc., one at 8926 North Lombard Street, and one located inside of the Fresh Del Monte plant at 9243 North Rivergate Boulevard in Portland. A separate search warrant also was executed at the Fresh Del Monte office within the plant.

The search warrants were authorized by a Federal Magistrate Judge following presentation of a sworn affidavit by an ICE Special Agent. That affidavit details the investigation which led to today's searches. It states that a joint investigation conducted by ICE and the Social Security Administration, Office of Inspector General, determined the following:

- The production workers at Fresh Del Monte are actually employees of American Staffing Resources, Inc.
- The premises of the businesses would contain evidence of the production and distribution of forged documents and of the employment of illegal aliens.
- More than 90% of American Staffing's employees were using Social Security numbers that belonged to other persons or were made up.
- Some of the individuals using those Social Security numbers apparently have criminal records, have previously been deported, or are wanted on warrants of deportation.

- The misuse of a person’s Social Security number can result in the true owner of that number having benefits reduced, suspended, or terminated. Among the individuals whose Social Security numbers are being misused are:
 - 7 persons who are sixty or above and are receiving Disability benefits;
 - 13 persons who are more than 70 years old;
 - 18 juveniles;
 - 29 deceased persons.

According to the affidavit, beginning in approximately January 2007, ICE conducted an undercover operation at American Staffing Resources, Inc. and Del Monte. During the course of that operation, the undercover informant openly discussed with managers at both Del Monte and American Staffing Resources, Inc. that he was not legally in the United States and did not have proper identification to work. An employee of American Staffing Resources, Inc. provided him a counterfeit Social Security card, and later provided him with counterfeit Social Security cards and counterfeit Resident Alien cards for others.

Based on this affidavit, the Magistrate Judge authorized ICE and Social Security agents to search for evidence of the following federal crimes: hiring illegal aliens; harboring illegal aliens; encouraging illegal aliens to reside in the United States; identity theft; immigration documents fraud; and Social Security fraud. The United States Attorney’s Office will make no further comment regarding the ongoing criminal investigation at this time.

In a separate, simultaneous action, ICE also obtained court authorization to search the Del Monte premises for illegal aliens. Any unauthorized workers will be interviewed in Portland by ICE staff and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Division of Immigration Health Services (HHS/DIHS) to record any medical, sole-caregiver or other humanitarian situations. Each worker will also be medically screened by HHS/DIHS to determine any urgent medical needs. This will assist ICE in making a determination whether to detain the worker or permit a humanitarian release. The workers taken into custody will be transported to the closest ICE processing facility which is in Tukwila, Washington. Once the processing is completed, removal proceedings will be initiated and the workers held at the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, Wash., pending an appearance before an immigration judge.

“Today’s enforcement action is part of ICE’s continued efforts to investigate employers who facilitate the hiring of undocumented workers,” said Leigh Winchell, Special Agent in Charge of the ICE Office of Investigations in Seattle. “No employer, regardless of industry or location is immune from complying with the nation’s laws.”

A 24-hour toll-free hotline exclusively for family members of the unauthorized workers who were arrested in today’s operation is available to respond to questions about detention status and the removal process. The toll-free phone number is: 866-341-3858.

For further information regarding the administrative immigration violations, please contact: Marc Raimondi, ICE Public Affairs, 202-661-7339, or Lorie Dankers, ICE Public Affairs, 206-793-8755.

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