

May 12, 2011
Austin, TX

5 arrested in Austin-based visa fraud scam

AUSTIN, Texas - Special agents with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) on Tuesday arrested an Austin-area businessman and four other individuals in connection with an H-2B visa fraud scam. All five were charged with conspiracy to commit visa fraud and conspiracy to encourage aliens to illegally enter and reside in the United States.

Those arrested, all Texas residents, include the following:

- Jose Ramiro Vicharely, 54, of Cedar Park, president and executive director of International Staffing Solutions Inc., doing business as Texas Staffing Resources (TSR);
- Irma Lopez Vicharely, 28, of Cedar Park;
- Angela Paola Faulk, 32, Jose's daughter, of Austin;
- Servando Gonzalez Jr., 25, Angela's husband, of Austin; and
- Pedro Saul Ocampo Mungia, 43, former TSR account manager, of Pflugerville.

ICE HSI agents executed the arrest warrants on May 10 and were later charged in federal court with conspiracy to commit visa fraud, and conspiracy to encourage aliens to illegally enter and reside in the United States. Jose and Irma Vicharely, Angela Faulk, and Pedro Ocampo Mungia are facing additional charges for encouraging an alien to illegally enter and reside in the United States for purposes of financial gain.

According to the indictment, the defendants began their criminal scheme in August 2004 to knowingly obtain H-2B visas under false pretenses. The defendants approached several Austin businesses and offered to obtain H-2B visas for foreign nationals to work for their companies, or for illegal aliens already working in their companies. Often, unbeknownst to the employers, the defendants then submitted fraudulent I-129 petitions with forged signatures or bogus supporting documentation requesting significantly more foreign workers than required or requested by employers. The defendants sold the excess the I-129 petitions to other illegal aliens in the Austin area for \$1,500 to \$2,200 per person. Furthermore, court documents allege the defendants also traveled to Mexico to help illegal aliens prepare and submit immigration forms, coach them as to what to say when interviewed by U.S. Consulate officials, and collect final payments from the illegal aliens.

In addition to the charges, the court seeks a \$1 million monetary judgment, the forfeiture of the U.S. currency located in three bank accounts, and several vehicles believed to have been purchased with proceeds derived from the alleged criminal activity.

Assistant U.S. Attorney's Garth Backe and Dan Guess, Western District of Texas, are prosecuting this case.

The public is reminded that the indictment is merely a charge and should not be considered as evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.