

ICE executes federal search warrant at Van Nuys, Calif., manufacturing plant in ongoing probe
8 illegal alien workers charged criminally; 130 others arrested on immigration violations

LOS ANGELES - U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents executed a federal search warrant yesterday afternoon at a Los Angeles-area computer printer cartridge manufacturing plant, arresting eight current and former company workers on criminal charges and another 130 employees on administrative immigration violations.

The search warrant, which remains under seal because the investigation is ongoing, was executed at the Van Nuys, Calif., headquarters of Micro Solutions Enterprises (MSE), a locally-owned manufacturer of computer imaging supplies.

In conjunction with yesterday's search, ICE agents took eight illegal aliens into custody on federal criminal charges for providing fraudulent information in order to obtain employment. Those arrested are current and former workers of the company. The violations include making false claims to U.S. citizenship and misuse of identity documents, charges that carry maximum prison sentences of three years and five years respectively. The charges reflect an increasing trend involving illegal aliens who take Social Security numbers and personal information belonging to U.S. citizens and legal residents and use it to illegally gain employment.

"The employment magnet is one of the key forces fueling illegal immigration," said Jennifer Silliman, deputy special agent in charge of the ICE office of investigations in Los Angeles. "When illegal aliens use fraudulent documents to get work, they not only exploit a vulnerability, they also take jobs from U.S. citizens and legal immigrants."

In addition to the criminal arrests, ICE agents encountered 130 workers at the plant who were found to be in the United States illegally, including nationals from six countries - Mexico (87), El Salvador (24), Guatemala (8), Peru (4), Honduras (4) and Colombia (3). These individuals were interviewed by ICE, and in some cases by medical staff from ICE's Division of Immigration Health Services, to determine if they had any medical, caregiver, or other humanitarian issues. The interviews help ICE decide whether individuals will be detained, or released on humanitarian grounds, while they await an immigration hearing.

As a result of those interviews, 84 of the illegal aliens identified at the plant yesterday have been detained. The group includes 65 men and 19 women. The vast majority will be transferred to the ICE contract detention facility in Lancaster, Calif., operated by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.

The remaining illegal workers, including 36 women and 10 men, were processed and released on humanitarian grounds. They were scheduled for follow-up removal processing interviews.

ICE has set up a 24-hour toll-free hotline for family members of the illegal workers arrested in yesterday's operation to address questions about detention status and the removal process. The toll-free phone number is: 1-866-341-3858. During yesterday's operation, ICE agents handed out flyers containing information about the hotline to MSE workers and family members who came to the plant inquiring about relatives. In addition, ICE contacted representatives of several prominent Hispanic community groups in the Los Angeles area to ensure they were aware of the enforcement action and had information about the toll-free number.

Since its establishment in 2003, ICE has dramatically enhanced its efforts to combat the unlawful employment of illegal aliens in this country. ICE's comprehensive strategy for worksite enforcement is aimed at promoting national security and public safety, protecting critical infrastructure, and ensuring fair labor standards.

In fiscal year 2007, ICE made more than 4,900 arrests in connection with worksite enforcement investigations, including 863 involving criminal violations. That represents a 45-fold increase in criminal worksite arrests compared to fiscal year 2001. In addition, ICE obtained more than \$31 million in criminal fines, restitutions and civil judgments in fiscal year 2007 as a result of worksite related enforcement actions.

-- ICE --

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.