

# Immigration raids Ohio chicken plant

## Reuters

By Andrea Hopkins

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U.S. immigration officials raided the Koch Foods Inc. chicken plant in Fairfield, Ohio, and expect to arrest more than 100 employees as part of a criminal operation against illegal immigrants, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) said on Tuesday.

"We're anticipating more than 100 (arrests) but the numbers have not been confirmed," said ICE spokesman Greg Palmore. "Simultaneous search warrants were executed at Koch Foods in Cincinnati and at the Koch headquarters in Chicago."

"This was a targeted work site enforcement operation involving criminal search warrants," Palmore said.

Palmore said the raid, which began at 10 a.m. EDT, was the culmination of a two-year investigation of Koch Foods, which produces chicken for export, food service and retail markets.

Calls to Koch Foods, headquartered in the Chicago suburb of Park Ridge, Illinois, were unanswered.

Tim Bachman, development services director for the city of Fairfield, said the plant near Cincinnati employs about 500 workers.

The raid on Koch was the latest in a series of immigration raids targeting businesses employing illegal workers across the United States. Many U.S. meat industry workers are immigrants, mainly Hispanics.

In December 2006, hundreds of employees were detained in raids at Swift & Co. meat plants in six states, part of a probe into identity theft involving illegal immigrants.

Deputies in the Butler County, Ohio sheriff's office were assisting federal immigration agents with the Koch raid and may provide detention facilities if required, a sheriff's office spokesman said.

Butler County Sheriff Richard Jones has been one of the country's most outspoken opponent of illegal immigration and has lobbied Washington for better enforcement and deportation of undocumented workers.

But immigration advocates in Cincinnati said the force used during the raids was terrifying the local community, including U.S.-born children of immigrants who are afraid their parents will be taken away.

"I got a call from one woman this morning and her husband was just picked up at the chicken processing plant," said Shelly Jarrett Bromberg, director of the Butler County Community Alliance.

"(Immigration agents) believe that in picking up a few people here, if done with enough force, will send back others through fear. The children don't understand and are now going home and asking if they're going to be arrested," she said.

"It impacts the entire community in a negative way. The law gives them the right to do this, but we think it could be more humanely done."

(Additional reporting by Bob Burgdorfer in Chicago)