

Meatpacker: Immigration raids were show

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GREELEY, Colo. — The head of meatpacker Swift & Co. said federal officials wanted a high-profile example of an immigration crackdown when they staged raids at its plants in six states in an identity theft investigation late last year.

President and CEO Sam Rovit said the government rejected the company's offer to help in the investigation months before the Dec. 12 raids.

"They were looking for a marquee to show the administration it was tough on immigration," he told the Greeley Tribune for a story published Friday.

Rovit denied knowingly hiring illegal immigrants and told the newspaper his company complied with federal hiring practices to check applicants' immigration status.

Rovit and an Immigration and Customs Enforcement spokesman did not immediately return phone and e-mail messages from The Associated Press Friday.

ICE arrested 1,282 workers during raids in Colorado, Nebraska, Texas, Utah, Iowa and Minnesota. Of those, 246 now face state or federal identity theft charges and the rest face immigration charges.

Greeley-based Swift says it is the world's second-largest processor of fresh beef and pork, and employs about 20,000 people, including about 15,000 in the U.S.