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News Releases

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Roofing companies indicted for money laundering, conspiring to hire illegal aliens

KANSAS CITY, Mo. - Several area roofing companies here, along with their owners and several employees were indicted by a federal grand jury for using a workforce composed largely of illegal aliens. U.S. Attorney John F. Wood, Western District of Missouri; and Pete Baird, assistant special agent in charge for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Office of Investigations in Kansas City, announced these indictments today.

ICE agents served arrest warrants this morning in an enforcement action that resulted in arresting six of the nine individuals charged in the indictment. In addition, 34 illegal aliens were arrested on administrative charges.

"Today's indictment alleges that the roofing companies utilized a business model that relied upon hiring illegal aliens," Wood said. "In fact, the indictment alleges that when his workers were arrested and deported, the business owner helped pay to have them smuggled back into the country a few days later so he could put them right back to work."

Tony Evans, 48, of Stilwell, Kan., and Luis Hernandez-Bautista, 33, aka Miguel Hernandez, of Kansas City, Mo., who is a U.S. permanent resident, were charged in a 15-count indictment returned under seal by a federal grand jury on May 29. Also charged were several roofing businesses with which they are associated: Mid-Continent Specialists Inc. (doing business as New Century Roofing), Metro Roofing Services Inc., LH Roofing LLP, and LHB Roofing Inc. Finally, the indictment also charged Mario Bautista-Ojendiz, 26, a Mexican national, of Grandview, Mo.; and the following six Mexican nationals with unknown addresses: Jose Juan Bello-Lazaro, 35, Dante Cardillo-Rendon, 25, Gaudencio Bautista, 32, Victor Manuel Castanon-Flores, 26, Armando Hernandez-Gonzalez, 31, and Abel Montiel-Angel, 38. The indictment was unsealed and made public today upon the arrests and initial court appearances of several defendants.

Until February 2006 Tony Evans was president of Mid-Continent Specialists, a Kansas corporation that has had offices in three states, including Independence, Mo.; Kansas City, Mo.; Parkville, Mo.; Pensacola, Fla.; and Gulfport, Miss. Metro Roofing is a company that was created by Evans in February 2006 after he left Mid-Continent Specialists. Hernandez-Bautista has created several businesses involved in the roofing industry, including LH Roofing and LHB Roofing, both registered in the state of Kansas. The remaining seven co-defendants were employees of those companies.

"Today's arrests should put businesses on notice that ICE will criminally charge those employers who knowingly transport and employ illegal aliens as part of their business model," said Pete Baird, assistant special agent in charge ICE Office of Investigations in Kansas City. "We will use all of our authorities to shut down businesses that exploit and harbor an illegal workforce. Across the country, the United States Attorneys have been crucial partners in our efforts to enforce our work-site laws."

The indictment alleges that on March 28, 2001, ICE agents arrested Hernandez-Bautista and 22

other illegal aliens in Gravois Mills, Mo. At the time of the arrests, they were in the Lake of the Ozarks area working on jobs for Mid-Continent Specialists. On April 12, 2001, 21 of the illegal aliens were deported to Mexico. Because Hernandez-Bautista contested his removal and posted a \$3,000 bond, he was not deported.

According to the indictment, on April 20, 2001, Mid-Continent Specialists and Evans provided about \$11,000 for Hernandez-Bautista to arrange to smuggle most of the previously deported illegal aliens back into the United States. The following day, about 15 of the illegal aliens were allegedly smuggled into the United States to resume working at Mid-Continent Specialists job sites.

On April 30, 2001, Mid-Continent Specialists petitioned the former Immigration and Naturalization Service to change Hernandez-Bautista's immigration status to lawful permanent resident by filing an Application for Alien Employment Certification. Once Hernandez-Bautista's immigration status was successfully changed, Hernandez-Bautista employed the illegal aliens through various companies he created, including LH Roofing.

LH Roofing employed the illegal aliens as "sub-contractors" for Mid-Continent Specialists, the indictment says, thereby attempting to insulate Mid-Continent Specialists from its illegal workforce. Mid-Continent Specialists allegedly paid the salaries of the illegal workers by laundering the funds through Hernandez-Bautista's companies. Hernandez-Bautista wrote checks to Bautista-Ojendiz, Bello-Lazaro, Cardillo-Rendon, Castanon-Flores, Hernandez-Gonzalez and Montiel-Angel, who cashed checks; the proceeds of these checks were then distributed to other workers who were illegal aliens.

The indictment alleges that using this scheme to pay illegal aliens through LH Roofing, Mid-Continent Specialists and Metro Roofing Services, laundered more than \$6 million in payments to illegal workers.

Mid-Continent Specialists, LH Roofing, LHB Roofing and Metro Roofing Services are charged with two separate conspiracies to encourage and induce and aiding and abetting illegal aliens to reside and remain in the United States for commercial advantage and private financial gain, with one conspiracy (involving Mid-Continent Specialists) beginning in March 2001 and the second conspiracy (involving Metro Roofing Services) beginning in February 2006. These four companies are also charged in related conspiracies to commit money laundering and one count which seeks forfeiture of the assets. Mid-Continent Specialists, LH Roofing, and LHB Roofing were also charged with five counts of encouraging and inducing illegal aliens and aiding and abetting illegal aliens to reside and remain in the United States for commercial advantage and private financial gain.

Hernandez-Bautista and Evans are each charged with two counts of conspiracy to encourage and induce and aiding and abetting illegal aliens to reside and remain in the United States for commercial advantage and private financial gain, five counts of encouraging and inducing illegal aliens and aiding and abetting illegal aliens to reside and remain in the United States for commercial advantage and private financial gain, two counts of conspiracy to commit money laundering, and one count which seeks forfeiture of their personal assets, including residential property owned by Hernandez-Bautista.

Bautista-Ojendiz, Bello-Lazaro, Cardillo-Rendon, Castanon-Flores, and Hernandez-Gonzalez are each charged with two counts of conspiracy to commit money laundering, one count of unlawful re-entry into the United States by a previously deported or removed alien, and one count which seeks forfeiture of their personal assets.

Bautista and Montiel-Angel are each charged with two counts of conspiracy to commit money laundering and one count that seeks forfeiture of their personal assets.

Wood cautioned that the charges contained in this indictment are simply accusations, and not evidence of guilt. Evidence supporting the charges must be presented to a federal trial jury, whose duty is to determine guilt or innocence.

Assistant U.S. Attorney David M. Ketchmark and Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Richard N. Staples are prosecuting this case. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement investigated it with assistance from the Internal Revenue Service's Criminal Investigation division, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, and the Social Security Administration.

-- 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.