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News Releases

DECEMBER 16, 2010 SAN JUAN, PR

ICE arrests 13 on document fraud, conspiracy, identity theft charges 3 previously deported criminal aliens among those arrested

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico - Thirteen individuals charged in four different criminal complaints with conspiracy, document fraud, aggravated identity theft, and reentering the United States after being deported, were arrested this morning by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) special agents with the assistance of the San Juan Municipal Police and Puerto Rico Police Department.

Juan J. Pereira-Pereira, 50, Santos Leon-Tarkington, 29, Josephine M. Diaz, 27, and Hector M. Rodriguez-Rosado, 35, were arrested for their alleged participation in a scheme to sell fraudulent Puerto Rico driver's licenses for up to \$800 at the Department of Motor Vehicles in Carolina, Puerto Rico. The four defendants are U.S. citizens.

Luis Lorenzo-Santana, 39, Joel Paulino-Tineo, 32, Francisco Baez-Tejada, 31, Angel Gutierrez, 47, and Mercedes Caraballo, 25, all nationals of the Dominican Republic, were arrested for visa fraud. According to the ICE HSI investigation, the defendants allegedly participated in a fraudulent scheme involving the use of altered Forms I-94, Arrival-Departure Record, and U.S. non-immigrant visas to obtain lawful permanent resident status in the United States.

Samuel Vasquez-Vilorio, 43, and Nelson Santiago-Cruz, 27, of the Dominican Republic, were arrested for reentering the United States after being deported. Reentry after deportation constitutes a criminal offense with a maximum penalty of up to 20 years in prison. Jose Antonio Paredes-Cabrera, 42, was charged with the same offense but remains at large.

Ramon Antonio Gonzalez-Gonzalez, 26, and Carmen Cedano, 31, of the Dominican Republic, were arrested for passport fraud and identity theft respectively. According to the criminal complaint, Gonzalez-Gonzalez used the passport of his deceased brother Luis Gonzalez-Gonzalez to enter the United States and obtain immigration benefits and Cedano unlawfully obtained a Puerto Rico driver's license using a stolen birth certificate of a U.S. citizen.

"ICE HSI aggressively investigates document fraud and those who commit identity theft to circumvent our nation's immigration laws," said Roberto Escobar-Vargas, special agent in charge of ICE HSI in Puerto Rico. "Identity theft is a growing problem that directly threatens national security and undermines the integrity of our national immigration system. Today's charges reflect ICE's commitment to investigating document fraud and those who assume other people's identities to skirt the law."

Document and benefit fraud pose a severe threat to national security and public safety because they create a vulnerability that may enable terrorists, criminals, and illegal aliens to gain entry to and remain in the United States. One of the ways ICE HSI addresses the infrastructure of illegal immigration is by detecting and deterring fraud before it erodes the integrity of the immigration process.

Established in April 2006, the Document and Benefit Fraud Task Forces (DBFTFs) focus their efforts on detecting, deterring and disrupting document and benefit fraud. Investigators from a variety of agencies with expertise in different aspects of fraud collaborate with U.S. Attorneys' Offices around the country to formulate a comprehensive approach in targeting the criminal organizations and the beneficiaries behind these fraudulent schemes.

This case is being prosecuted by Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Eugenio Lomba.

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U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.

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