

# Restaurants Closed After ICE Raids

## *Mambo's Headquarters Raided First*

Wednesday, December 2, 2009

**HOUSTON** -- Several well-known Houston restaurants were closed on Wednesday after immigration agents made dozens of arrests, KPRC Local 2 reported.



Mambo Restaurant

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Officials said the investigation began at the corporate office and an adjacent restaurant of Mambo's Seafood Restaurants, located in the 6100 block of Airline. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents raided the buildings at about 9 a.m.

A government spokesman said they executed a court order to enforce immigration statutes and detained workers the government claimed are in the U.S. illegally.

At the same time, a second group of agents raided the Mambo's restaurant on Longpoint near Gessner Road in Spring Branch and detained workers there.

Thirty-one employees were detained for immigration violations.

By Wednesday afternoon, Mambo's temporarily closed some of its seven Houston restaurants. A spokesman said Mambo's policy is consistent with U.S. law, and that citizenship status and papers are checked on all new employees. Officials said they are cooperating with the federal investigation.

The chain plans to reopen its restaurants when enough staff is hired.

Maria Hernandez's husband, Anastacio, was one of those detained. She said he has lived in the U.S. illegally for more than 20 years.

"He's the only one that has a family and I don't know why they took him. He wasn't doing anything wrong," Hernandez said.

She said he worked two jobs to support her and their four children. Now he's facing deportation.

"He's the sole provider for our children. I don't know what I'm going to do," Hernandez said.

The restaurant on Long Point is next to a labor agency where illegal immigrants routinely gather in the mornings to look for work.

Two men who admitted that they are in this country illegally said the immigration agents simply told them to leave, then the agents went into the restaurant and began arresting employees.

"There were a bunch of us here and all immigration said was, 'Go across the street.' And that's all they said," said the man who did not want to be identified.

"There were between 100 and 150 people standing here, all in different groups. I was here in my car when they came in and they came in with two police and ICE went inside. The police stayed outside," said another man known only as Jose.

ICE spokesman Gregory Palmer said the agents were there to execute a court order, and he suspected that there were only enough of them to deal with the illegal workers found in the restaurant.