



Inside ICE

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ICE agents examine some of the evidence collected during Operation "Newlywed Game," which is believed to be the largest marriage fraud investigation ever conducted in the United States.

Landmark Marriage Fraud Case Nets 44 In California

SANTA ANA, Calif.—In what is believed to be one of the largest marriage fraud investigations ever undertaken in the United States, a total of 44 individuals have been indicted for their roles in an elaborate scheme to obtain fraudulent immigrant visas for hundreds of Chinese and Vietnamese nationals based on sham marriages to U.S. citizens.

The indictments stem from a three-year, multi-agency investigation known as Operation "Newlywed Game." The probe, led by ICE, received substantial assistance from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the Orange County

District Attorney's Office, and the U.S. State Department's Diplomatic Security Service (DSS).

Based on sealed indictments, ICE agents, accompanied by personnel from the DSS, executed arrest warrants and conducted searches at 13 locations in California on November 29. During the operation, 11 of the defendants were taken into custody. Most of the remaining suspects were either already under arrest on other charges.

The suspects in the case face a variety of federal charges, including conspiracy, fraud and misuse of visas, making false

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ICE Leads Landmark Marriage Fraud Investigation

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statements in passport applications, marriage fraud, and inducing aliens to enter the country illegally.

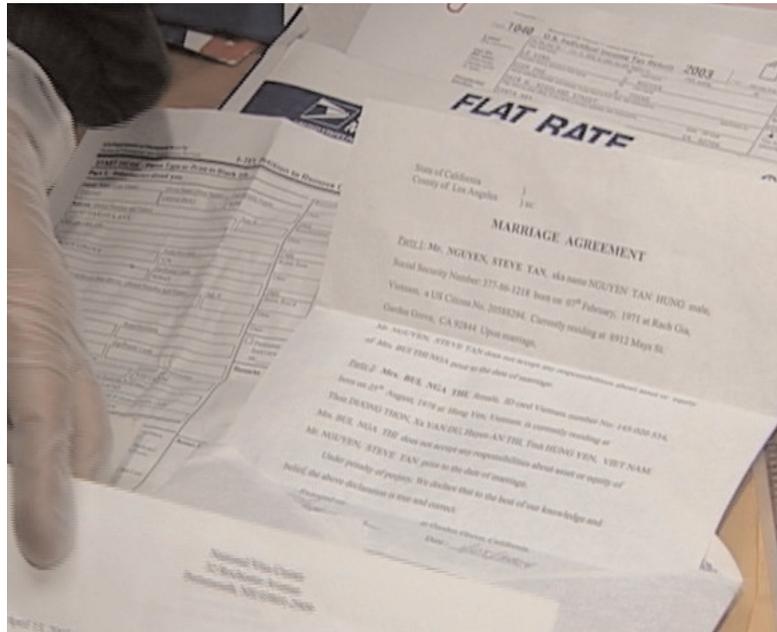
According to the indictments, the marriage fraud scheme involved a loose-knit network of “facilitators,” “recruiters,” and “petitioners.” At the heart of the conspiracy were the facilitators, who charged up to \$60,000 to orchestrate sham marriages for foreign nationals with U.S. citizens for the purpose of submitting fraudulent immigrant visa petitions on behalf of the aliens.

The facilitators often used recruiters, who typically received \$1,000 for each referral, to identify U.S. citizens willing to marry the aliens and submit the immigration visa petitions to USCIS. The U.S. citizen petitioners were paid thousands of dollars, plus travel expenses.

Since the foreign nationals often resided in Vietnam or China, the facilitators would then make arrangements for the U.S. citizen petitioners to go overseas to marry the aliens. After the sham marriage, the facilitators assisted the petitioners and aliens with filing bogus immigration petitions. The facilitators would also coach the petitioners and the aliens on what to say at subsequent adjustment of status interviews to persuade the USCIS officer that the couple had a legitimate marriage.

Because many of the facilitators used the same petitioners more than once, some of the U.S. citizens involved in the scheme had multiple “spouses” and submitted numerous fraudulent immigration petitions. Adjudicators at the USCIS California Service Center where the petitions are processed noticed the irregularities and alerted ICE agents, sparking the investigation. USCIS continued to support the investigation by referring scores of these cases through its newly established Fraud Detection and National Security (FDNS) program.

“Visa fraud undermines the integrity of our nation’s legal immigration system,” said Loraine Brown, special agent-in-charge for ICE Investigations in Los Angeles. “These arrests should send a clear message that ICE is working aggressively to ensure that this kind of criminal activity does not go unchecked or unpunished.”



ICE agents examine a marriage agreement and other documents discovered during what is believed to be the largest marriage fraud investigation ever conducted in the United States.

“You can expect an increasing number of immigration benefit fraud cases being detected as a result of USCIS and ICE’s new joint anti-fraud strategy,” said Don Crocetti, Director of the FDNS for USCIS.

As part of Operation “Newlywed Game,” investigators reviewed scores of immigration files, as well as employment and travel histories to determine each defendant’s role. According to investigators, the suspects went to elaborate lengths to make the sham marriages appear legitimate, posing for wedding pictures, fabricating love letters, even creating fraudulent joint tax returns.

In addition to prosecuting the perpetrators of the scam, authorities are seeking to identify foreign nationals who may have illegally received immigration benefits as a result. ICE agents say those cases will be reviewed on an individual basis for potential criminal prosecution and deportation. ■

Inside ICE is an e-newsletter produced by the ICE Office of Public Affairs to inform the public about the mission, operations and activities of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

ICE DRO's Torres Joins Secretary Chertoff At SBI Press Conference

Acting Director of the ICE Office of Detention and Removal John Torres appeared at a press conference December 1 with DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff and Chief of the Border Patrol David Aguilar to discuss ICE's role in the DHS Secure Border Initiative (SBI).



Acting Director of the ICE Office of Detention and Removal John Torres, center, speaks at a press conference in Washington, D.C. held December 1 with DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff, right, and Chief of the Border Patrol David Aguilar. Torres discussed ICE's role in the DHS Secure Border Initiative.

The Secure Border Initiative (SBI) is a comprehensive multi-year plan to secure America's borders and reduce illegal migration. Secretary Chertoff has announced an overall vision for the SBI that includes, among other initiatives, expanded ICE detention and removal capabilities to eliminate "catch and release" once and for all, and greatly increased ICE interior enforcement of our immigration laws—including more robust worksite enforcement.

Speaking at the press conference, Torres said one aspect of the SBI stems from the findings of a working group that studied the removal process in order to determine how ICE can remove people more efficiently. Torres said that, as a result of the study, ICE had reengineered the removal process for "OTMs"—aliens who are nationalities other than Mexican—and expanded the use of expedited removals in order to attain greater efficiency.

"One of the first items that this working group identified," Torres said, "was that the use of expedited removal in Operation Texas Hold 'Em and in the Arizona Border Control Initiative was actually a very efficient process."

Expedited removal is a legal process that allows ICE to remove illegal aliens without a formal hearing before an immigration judge if the aliens have no credible claim to asylum or any other relief from deportation. Torres said that with expedited removal, ICE can decrease the processing time—from apprehension to removal—from approximately 90

days to around 30 days, with a resulting increase in available detention bed space. Torres said the use of expedited removal, as well as funding for 2,000 additional detention bed spaces in ICE's Fiscal Year (FY) 2006 budget, will aid ICE in meeting the SBI objectives.

Under the SBI, Hondurans, Brazilians and Nicaraguan nationals apprehended across the entire Southwest border are now in expedited removal, and Guatemalans were added to the expedited removal process early this month.

"People from these countries of origination are now going to be in expedited removal," Secretary Chertoff said. "They will be detained until they're returned, and they will be returned home. Guatemalans totaled over 22,600 apprehensions in Fiscal Year '05, and for the first month-and-a-half of '06, we've already had 3,200 apprehensions, so this is a significant number of people."

On December 8, DHS announced that under SBI, more than 3,850 non-Mexican aliens were turned over to ICE for detention under expedited removal. Thus far, ICE has removed roughly 2,750 of these individuals from the country. ■

Jordanian Man Pleads Guilty To Middle East Smuggling Conspiracy

A Jordanian man has pleaded guilty to participating in a conspiracy to smuggle scores of illegal aliens from Iraq and Jordan into the United States after a three-year undercover ICE investigation.

Thaer Omran Ismail Asaifi, also known as Abu Harp, 35, admitted on December 13 to participating in a conspiracy that was headed

by his wife —naturalized American citizen Neeran Hakim Zaia, of Sterling Heights, Mich. From early 2001 through September 2004, their operation illegally smuggled scores of Iraqi and Jordanian nationals into the United States through Ecuador and Peru for profit.

"This guilty plea represents an important milestone in

this three-year ICE undercover investigation known as Operation Tortuga," said Acting Assistant Secretary John Clark. "ICE owes a special debt of gratitude to the Peruvian authorities, who provided critical assistance in combating this criminal syndicate."

The charges arise from an extraterritorial undercover investigation that was initi-

ated and led by the Washington Field Office of ICE. Substantial assistance, including personnel and resources, was provided by ICE's Detroit Office, the ICE Attache Office in Peru, the Peruvian National Police and Peruvian Immigration authorities. The State Department's Diplomatic Security Service also assisted with the investigation. ■

ICE Arrests Salvadoran Fugitive, Convicted Sex Offender

ROCKFORD, Ill.—A convicted sex offender from El Salvador who changed his identity to elude deportation was tracked down at his job as a motel manager and arrested Dec. 1 by ICE.

José Perdomo-Perdomo, aka Roberto Martinez, 43, was working as a manager at the Sunset Motel when he was arrested by ICE deportation officers, accompanied by Rockport police officers. Perdomo's arrest came nearly three years to the date after he defied a federal deportation order and became a fugitive.

Perdomo first entered the United States in 1991 and became a lawful permanent resident, or "green card" holder, in 1993. He was convicted in 1995 in McHenry County Circuit Court of stalking and threatening a female victim with bodily harm

and sentenced to 24 months probation. In 1996 he was convicted in McHenry County Circuit Court of indecent solicitation and sexual exploitation of a child under age twelve and sentenced to 24 months probation and 144 days of jail time.

Because of his criminal convictions, Perdomo was stripped of his permanent resident status and placed into deportation proceedings. He was ordered deported by a federal immigration judge in August 2000. Perdomo appealed his case to the Board of Immigration Appeals but lost the appeal in June 2002.

On Nov. 26, 2002, Perdomo failed to surrender to immigration authorities in Chicago for deportation. He defied the order and remained in the U.S. as a fugitive, thereby becoming a target for

ICE's National Fugitive Operation Program (NFOP), a program that specifically targets fugitive aliens—individuals who were previously ordered deported from the U.S and failed to surrender to the federal government.

ICE Chicago's Fugitive Operations team began searching for Perdomo in February 2003, but was unable to locate him at his last known address. ICE officers continued chasing down leads and received a break in the case when they got a tip in July 2005 about a vehicle Perdomo was driving. ICE officers compared DMV records and photos and determined that Perdomo had changed his identity to Roberto Martinez. After receiving another tip that Perdomo was working at a motel in the Rockford area, ICE officers conducted surveillance at local motels until they spotted Perdomo's



José Perdomo-Perdomo, aka Roberto Martinez.

vehicle at the Sunset Motel and made the arrest

“ICE was created to restore integrity to this country's immigration system,” said Glenn Trivelino, Chicago's acting field office director for the ICE Office of Detention and Removal Operations. “We will continue to identify, arrest and remove fugitives who blatantly disregard our laws and defy the orders of our federal immigration judges.” ■

ICE Money Laundering Case Nabs Nine in Salt Lake City

SALT LAKE CITY—Nine Salt Lake City-area people have been indicted for their roles in operating a series of illegal money transmitter businesses used to launder millions of dollars in drug money and to funnel drug proceeds to accounts in Mexico and throughout the United States.

The charges are the result of an ICE-led investigation under the auspices of the Organized Crime Drug

Enforcement Task Force program. The defendants are charged with conspiracy to commit money laundering, operating unlicensed money transmitting businesses and failing to file the required currency transactions.

The nine defendants, including four brothers, face a variety of charges, including conspiracy to commit money laundering, conducting an unlicensed

money transmitting business, failure to file a currency transaction report, structuring monetary transactions, re-entry after deportation and being an alien in possession of a firearm. All but three of the defendants are in custody.

The indictment alleges that, beginning as far back as 1999, the suspects operated a succession of money transmitter businesses that were used to launder pro-

ceeds from illegal drug sales. According to investigators, the defendants employed a variety of methods to mask the illegal transactions, including moving the money through local currency exchange houses and check cashing services and maintaining multiple bank accounts.

The charges are the result of a two-year multi-agency undercover investigation led by ICE. ■

Former Boy Scout Exec Gets 8 Years For Child Porn

FORT WORTH, Texas—A former executive with the Boy Scouts of America headquarters was sentenced to eight years in federal prison and supervised release for life for possessing child pornography.

Douglas Sovereign Smith, Jr., 62, received the sentence on December 5 following his guilty plea to one count of receipt and distribution of child pornography. The Boy Scouts of America employed Smith, of Colleyville, Texas, for 39 years. Before retiring in February 2005 following his arrest by ICE

agents, Smith held the position of National Director of Programs.

On Feb. 22, 2005, ICE agents executed a search warrant at Smith's Colleyville home and seized two computers and several computer discs. Forensic analyses of the two hard drives and discs revealed approximately 520 stored images of child pornography, including a movie file. The images of child pornography depicted males under that age of 18 engaged in sexually explicit conduct. Of the 520 images, 111 images were of prepubescent

children, under the age of 12, engaged in sexually explicit conduct with other prepubescent children and adults.

"Child pornography has devastating impacts to its innocent victims," said Kenneth Cates, special agent-in-charge of the ICE Dallas office. "Our ICE special agents have arrested thousands of people nationwide in many occupations following child pornography investigations. We will continue to act as an active advocate for the silenced children who are unable to fight their victimizers." ■

L.A. Woman Pleads Guilty To Trafficking Her Niece For Prostitution

LOS ANGELES—A West Los Angeles woman pleaded guilty December 6 to a federal human trafficking charge for bringing her niece into the United States and forcing her to work as a prostitute.

Alena Okhotina, 35, pleaded guilty to one count of trafficking into servitude, an offense that carries a potential penalty of 20 years in federal prison. The charges are the result of a joint investigation by ICE, the FBI, the Office of Inspector General for the United States Department of

Labor and the Los Angeles Police Department.

Okhotina paid for a ticket for her 18-year-old niece to fly from Russia to Los Angeles. When the teenager arrived in Los Angeles, she lived with Okhotina at her apartment. Soon after, Okhotina took possession of her niece's passport and told her that she would have to work as a prostitute. Okhotina coerced her niece to work as a prostitute by telling her that she would be arrested if she went to the police because she was

here in the United States illegally.

"Sex trafficking is one of the vilest forms of exploitation and the fact that someone would inflict this kind of suffering on their own flesh and blood is unconscionable," said Los Angeles ICE special agent-in-charge Loraine Brown. "ICE is working closely with the other members of the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area Task Force on Human Trafficking to ensure that those who engage in this reprehensible practice are brought to justice and pay the price." ■

ICE New Orleans Arrests 14 Illegal Workers

KENNER, La.—ICE agents arrested 14 illegal aliens working for a contractor at a petrochemical plant in suburban New Orleans on December 13.

The arrested workers were scheduled to work at the Conoco Phillips Alliance Refinery in Belle Chasse, La. All of the arrested workers possessed counterfeit social security cards and identity documents.

The illegal workers were arrested at the Greater New Orleans Industrial Education Council (GNOIEC), a non-profit organization that provides safety-training classes for workers at petrochemical plants in the greater New Orleans area. ICE has been working with the GNOIEC organization to train their staff and assist in identifying foreign nationals who use counterfeit documents to obtain employment at critical infrastructure sites. The training program has been successful, and ICE and GNOIEC routinely work together to share information.

The arrests are part of an ongoing ICE criminal investigation of subcontractors operating in the petroleum industry. Critical infrastructures such as airports, defense installations and bio-agriculture industries are an ICE law enforcement priority. ■



U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

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 four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.

Inside ICE

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1-866-DHS-2ICE**

ICE MOST WANTED

This Week's Featured Fugitive:

Cristobal Fuentes-Villareal



ALIASES: Unknown

HEIGHT: 6'0"

DATE OF BIRTH: 03/05/1970

WEIGHT: 210 lbs.

PLACE OF BIRTH: Mexico

HAIR: Black

SCARS/MARKS: Unknown

EYES: Brown

LAST KNOWN WHEREABOUTS: Unknown

BACKGROUND: Cristobal Fuentes-Villareal is wanted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in connection with an alien smuggling organization that in 2000 and 2001 utilized semi-tractor trailers to smuggle illegal aliens from the southwest border to Phoenix, Arizona.

If you have any information on the whereabouts of the above fugitive, please call **1-866-DHS-2ICE**
View more ICE Most Wanted online at: www.ice.gov/graphics/investigations/wanted/

Returning A Mexican Fugitive



ICE officers from the El Paso Field Office of Detention and Removal Operations, their faces obscured for operational security reasons, escort Maria de la Luz Molina-Avila, 31, across the Stanton Street Bridge in El Paso during her deportation December 6. Molina-Avila, a citizen of Mexico, was wanted in Zamora, Mexico, for allegedly accepting 100 pesos, about \$10, in exchange for allowing a man to have sex with Molina-Avila's teenage relative. Her deportation is part of a cooperative effort between ICE El Paso and Mexican officials that has resulted in the arrest of many fugitive criminals since the partnership began four years ago. Mexican fugitives wanted for serious crimes often attempt to avoid prosecution by hiding in the United States, where many commit additional crimes. Working in conjunction with the Mexican Attorney General's Office, ICE El Paso detention and removal officers have returned 18 fugitives to Mexico during 2005. In return, Mexican authorities have turned six fugitives wanted for serious crimes in the United States. Last year, local ICE El Paso located and returned 21 fugitives to Mexico, including 10 wanted for murder.