



Inside ICE

ICE WARNS AGAINST NET SCAMS

ICE has issued a warning to the public about two new Iraq-related Internet scams targeting Americans, both of which falsely claim a connection to ICE.

One of the scams is directed at the relatives of fallen U.S. soldiers in Iraq and contains a link to the ICE homepage. In the other, the sender claims to be an ICE agent in Iraq tracking Saddam Hussein's assets.

"These new Internet fraud schemes are among the worst we have ever encountered," said Assistant Secretary Michael Garcia. "Most troubling is the fact that some are targeting the relatives of U.S. soldiers killed in Iraq. We are also concerned about the fact that these criminals are impersonating ICE agents and referring to ICE's official Web site in an effort to steal money from Americans who have lost loved ones. Those who receive these bogus e-mail solicitations should ignore and delete them."

"These new Internet fraud schemes are among the worst we have ever encountered."

**Michael Garcia
Assistant Secretary**

The first scheme involves e-mail sent to relatives of U.S. soldiers killed in Iraq. Claiming to be a volunteer working with U.S. forces, the sender states that a late friend, who was also a U.S. soldier killed in Iraq, was a very good friend of the relatives' slain son or daughter. The sender then goes on to ask for assistance in obtaining funds kept for them by the deceased friend. The sender says they will provide more details when the relative returns their email. The sender then adds a link to ICE's actual Web site, the portion of which discusses ICE operations in Iraq.

In the second scheme, a blanket e-mail is being distributed which claims to be from an "Immigration and Customs Enforcement" official in Iraq who is responsible for tracking down funds looted from the Iraqi Central Bank by Saddam Hussein's son. The sender lists ICE's Web site address in the e-mail in an effort to establish bona fides. The sender then asks for confirmation of the e-mail address of the recipient for as the sender states "there is a very important and confidential matter which I want us both to discuss."

The public should know that these solicitations are not associated with any ICE personnel or activities, and further, that the public should not respond or provide any personal or financial information to anyone who makes such an overture. The ICE Cyber Crimes Center in northern Virginia and the ICE Office of Professional Responsibility in Washington, D.C., are investigating these Internet fraud schemes.

It is true that ICE agents assigned to the U.S. Central Command did conduct investigative operations in Iraq for many months after the U.S. invasion as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Among other activities, ICE agents conducted financial investigations that resulted in the seizure of \$32 million in U.S. currency in Iraq. ICE agents also traced the serial numbers from the roughly \$756 million in U.S. currency and 90 million Euros seized by the U.S. military in April 2003.

The ICE probe revealed that Saddam Hussein had written a letter to the Governor of the Central Bank of Iraq on March 19, 2003, in which he authorized his son to withdraw \$920 million in the U.S. currency and 90 million Euros from the bank.

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ICE ARRESTS MAN IN CHILD SEX TOURISM CASE

PORTLAND, Ore. — A 50-year-old Oregon man was arraigned in federal court February 16 on charges of traveling to Kenya to engage in sexual acts with a minor following an investigation by ICE agents.

Lester Christian Weber was named in a seven-count indictment alleging that he traveled to Kenya last year where he knowingly engaged in sexual acts with two victims under the age of 12.

The indictment also charges Weber with aggravated sexual abuse, using the Internet to entice a minor to engage in sexual acts and possession and transportation of child pornography. Weber was arrested Dec. 3, and has remained in custody since.

In January 2004, ICE special agents from Portland traveled to Nairobi, Kenya. Working closely with the Kenyan National Police, the ICE agents and Kenyan police conducted several interviews and served a search warrant as part of the investigation.

Several of the charges lodged in this case are being brought under the provisions of the recently enacted PROTECT Act, which substantially strengthened federal laws against predatory crimes and others involving the exploitation of children. If convicted, Weber faces up to life in prison for each count of aggravated sexual abuse and up to 30 years imprisonment on the enticement

and traveling charges.

The investigation leading to the indictment is part of Operation Predator, a nationwide ICE initiative to protect children from sexual predators, including those who travel overseas for sex with minors, Internet child pornographers, criminal alien sex offenders and child sex traffickers.

ICE encourages the reporting of

suspected child predators and any suspicious activity through its toll-free hotline at 1-866-DHS-2ICE.

This hotline is staffed around the clock by investigators. Suspected child sexual exploitation or missing children may be reported to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, an Operation Predator partner, at 1-800-843-5678

ICE DEPORTS SALVADORAN MAN WHO RAPED, IMPREGNATED 12-YEAR-OLD

OMAHA, Neb. — ICE detention and removal officers deported a man to El Salvador February who had been convicted of sexually assaulting a 12-year-old girl. The assault resulted in the girl becoming pregnant.

Zepeda is a top priority for us," said Scott Baniecek, St. Paul Field Office Director of the ICE Office of Detention and Removal Operations. "Those who victimize the most vulnerable among us will be sought out, apprehended and removed."

ICE special agents encountered Hernandez-Zepeda while he was serving his sentence for the crime and placed a "detrainer" on him, so that ICE was notified and took custody of him Jan. 12 upon his release from prison. In an effort to ensure public safety, ICE conducts checks of jails and prisons nationwide to locate, identify and then deport criminal aliens.

During fiscal year 2004, which ended Sept. 30, ICE detention and removal agents removed 3,152 criminal aliens and status violators from a five-state area that includes Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota. Of that number, 1,488 were classified as criminal aliens for having been convicted of such crimes as drug offenses, assault and battery, armed robbery, rape and fraud.



Eligio Hernandez-Zepeda

Eligio Hernandez-Zepeda, 40, of El Salvador, illegally entered the United States in 1990. He was arrested for the crime in Schuyler, Neb., in July 1997 and was convicted in April 1998 of first-degree sexual assault. He was sentenced to a term of not less than 10 years and not more than 15 years.

"Targeting people like Hernandez-

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. Please send comments and contributions to:

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Editor

ICE AGENTS TARGET CRIMINALS, VIOLENT GANGS

ICE agents in Chicago and New York, working in separate operations, have arrested 60 criminal aliens and gang members with extensive criminal histories.

In New York, 41 criminal aliens with felony convictions were arrested by ICE agents February 2 as part of a joint public safety initiative between ICE and the U.S. Probation Office of the Eastern District of New York.

The initiative targeted criminal aliens who have been convicted of federal felonies and were on probation. Those arrested have prior felony convictions for murder, firearms trafficking, drug trafficking, money laundering, racketeering, fraud, false statements, receipt of stolen property, producing false identity documents, copyright infringement and other federal felonies.

"We are committed to restoring integrity to the nation's immigration system by arresting and seeking the deportation of criminal aliens who have preyed upon the nation's communities and residents," said Martin D. Ficke, ICE Special Agent-in-Charge in New York. "These are the criminals who turn the American dream into a nightmare, and they will not be given the chance to cause more harm."

Twenty-two of the 41 criminal aliens arrested in New York are Lawful Permanent Residents, or so-called "green card" holders. The remaining 19 are aliens who are without legal status and will be entered into removal proceedings. An immigration judge will determine whether or not they can be deported.

The aliens arrested in New York include citizens of Afghanistan,

Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Ghana, Haiti, Italy, Jamaica, Jordan, Mexico, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, Trinidad, Turkey, Ukraine and Venezuela.

"We are committed to restoring integrity to the nation's immigration system by arresting...criminal aliens who have preyed upon the nation's communities and residents."

**Marin D. Ficke
Special Agent-in-Charge
New York**

In Chicago, ICE agents and local law enforcement officers specializing in gang-related activity spread out across Chicago's western suburbs February 7-9 arresting 19 foreign-born known street gang members. An additional five aliens were also arrested during the course of the operation.

Most of those arrested were Mexican nationals with the majority possessing extensive criminal histories, including convictions for drugs, aggravated assault, firearms and theft. One Guatemalan national was also arrested.

The Chicago operation targeted foreign-born members of violent Hispanic street gangs. It was conducted by ICE agents who were assisted by local Illinois police departments from Addison, Carpentersville, Elgin, Glendale Heights, Hanover Park, Streamwood and West Chicago.

Since 2000, ICE agents on Chicago's Violent Gang Task Force have arrested more than 375 known gang members. ICE agents also identify gang members at jails and prisons and process them for removal from the United States.

ICE AGENTS ARREST GUATEMALAN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

ORLANDO, Fla. — A 39-year-old Guatemalan human rights violator linked to the torture and killings of several Guatemalan civilians and guerilla members in the late 1980s was arrested February 18 by ICE special agents.

Arrested was Justo Odilon Lucas-Mateo, who served with the civil patrol, a unit that has been implicated with serious human rights violations in Guatemala. The Guatemalan army implemented the civil patrol to reduce the impact of rebel forces on the public.

An immigration judge found Mateo ineligible for any form of immigration relief Feb. 22, 2000, and ordered him removed from the United States after information was pre-

sented in court that proved that Mateo participated in the torture and killing of many civilians and guerilla members while he was a member of the patrol. After the judge's ruling, Mateo went into hiding here until ICE agents captured him.

"This arrest illustrates ICE's resolve for targeting criminals and restoring integrity to our immigration system," said Raymond M. Connolly, Special Agent-in-Charge for the Tampa office. "We will not relent until human rights violators are brought to justice and removed from our communities and our country."

Mateo is in ICE custody awaiting removal from the country.

11 PLEAD GUILTY IN MASSIVE ASYLUM FRAUD

WASHINGTON, D.C. — An 11th person pleaded guilty February 11 in federal court to a massive immigration benefits scam by organizations that, among other things, coached aliens on how to, among other things, solicit sympathy from asylum officers.

“Fraudulent documents present risks...the risk that criminals will use those documents in criminal schemes...and the risk to our national security.”

**Marcy Forman
Director
ICE Office of Investigation**

"We're seeing more and more of these types of cases every day," said Marcy Forman, Director of ICE's Office of Investigation. "When someone attempts to obtain benefits by deception, it degrades the entire immigration system because fraudulent documents present risks--the risk that criminals will use those documents in criminal schemes and the risk to our national security."

Springfield, Va., resident Johnson Aliffin, 33, pleaded guilty to conspiracy and immigration fraud and agreed to forfeit \$10,000. Aliffin's plea was the result of "Operation Jakarta," a two-year, ICE-led investigation into the illegal practices of four Indonesian immigration brokers and consultants operating in Northern Virginia and Maryland.

The investigation revealed that the defendants aided thousands of Indonesian aliens living throughout the United States to apply by fraud for a wide variety of government benefits through alien labor certification, Virginia driver's licenses and identification cards, United States passports and Social Security cards.

The government's affidavit alleges that the principal frauds pursued by the defendants were asylum fraud, labor certification fraud and identification document fraud. With regard to asylum, the government's investigation revealed that several of the defendants were routinely preparing fraudulent asylum applications for Indonesian clients in return for a fee of \$2,000 or more.

These applications typically contained false claims that the applicant had been raped, sexually assaulted, beaten or robbed by Muslims in Indonesia on account of the applicant's Chinese ethnicity or adherence to Christianity. Many of these claims were stock accounts repeated with little variation from application to application. The defendants often supported these claims with counterfeit Indonesian documents, such as birth certificates, baptismal certificates and police reports.

The investigation also revealed that the defendants coached their clients to exploit the perceived sympathies of the asylum officers and immigration judges assigned to consider the applications. For example, the defendants counseled married aliens to feature the wife as the lead applicant because the defendants believed asylum officers and immigration judges were more sympathetic to women and less likely to question them aggressively. Applicants were told to cry, plead and avoid positive references to Indonesia.

MAN CHARGED FOR LYING ABOUT AL QAEDA PLOT

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. — A 36-year-old Algerian national who fabricated information about a terrorist plot in an apparent effort to avoid deportation was charged for making false statements to a federal agency following an investigation by ICE, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF).

According to the criminal complaint, Allali allegedly lied to the FBI-JTTF throughout January when he told them that he knew and, in the late 1990s, resided overseas with members of the al Qaeda ter-

rorist network. He also claimed to have traveled into the United States in 1998 with al Qaeda members and that early this year there was an al Qaeda operational cell in the United States that was planning to detonate bombs in five major U.S. cities in early 2005. According to the complaint, Allali fabricated this story in an attempt to avoid deportation.

"This is an extreme case of crying wolf," said ICE Resident Agent-in-Charge Michelle Mangold. "Lies told to federal authorities will eventually be discovered, especially by federal agents trained to investigate

and dig for the truth. Prosecuting these cases sends a strong signal that the consequences for fabricating information on terrorist organizations are severe."

According to Assistant U.S. Attorney Sharon M. Jackson, who is prosecuting the case for the government, Allali faces a maximum possible prison sentence of 10 years and a maximum possible fine of \$250,000 on each of the three counts listed in the complaint. Allali is currently being held in Illinois on an immigration deportation warrant.

ICE NABS TWO MICHIGAN MEN FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING SCAM

DETROIT, Mich. — Two men were arrested by ICE special agents February 15 for forcing at least four women from the Ukraine to work as exotic dancers at a strip club.

According to the criminal complaint, Michail Aronov, 32, who is a citizen of Lithuania, and Aleksander Maksimenko, 25, a U.S. citizen, are suspected of recruiting women from the Ukraine to travel to the United States under the guise of working as waitresses here. Once the women arrived in the U.S., they were forced to work at “Cheetah’s” strip club.

The women were recruited from the Ukraine to work as waitresses. When they arrived, they were held against their will and forced to work as strippers at “Cheetah’s” strip club.

The women were forced to work 12 hours per day, six days a week to pay off \$12,000 in travel expenses and another \$10,000 for identification documentation. The men took all of the money the women were paid by customers of the club as payment for these “expenses.” The complaint said two of the women had been forced to work since May. The other two were recruited as strippers overseas and arrived in the United States in September with their husbands. They have not seen or spoken to their husbands since their arrival.

The women were driven to their work from their apartment and back again. There was no telephone in their apartment. The complaint also states the women were intimidated, hit and threatened with death.

ICE REMOVES MURDER SUSPECT

NEWARK, N.J. — A man wanted for murder in the Republic of Georgia was removed from the United States by ICE officers February 18.

Gochi Gabidauri, 31, is wanted on an INTERPOL warrant by Georgian authorities for allegedly shooting a man to death in March 2002. He had illegally entered the United States in August 2003 and later claimed asylum. His request was denied and ICE officers arrested him in October 2003.

Gabidauri was held in ICE custody following his arrest and was ordered deported by an immigration judge in

January. He was escorted back to the Republic of Georgia by officers from the Newark Office of ICE Detention and Removal Operations (DRO). The ICE officers escorted Gabidauri to Tblisi, Georgia, where he was turned over to Georgian authorities without incident.

“We are pleased that we have removed another dangerous criminal from the streets of our community,” said Michael Anderson, Acting DRO Field Office Director in Newark. “This sends an important message that ICE will not allow our country and our immigration system to be used as a refuge for criminals.”

Last year, ICE DRO in Newark removed 2,443 aliens, 55 percent of whom were criminals. Removal of Georgian nationals, while unusual, is not unprecedented. Last year, ICE nationwide removed 45 Georgian nationals, 18 of whom were convicted of crimes in the United States.

ICE FPS ARRESTS INDIANA MAN BARRED FROM SOCIAL SECURITY

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. — A 43-year-old Indianapolis man who defied an order barring him from ever entering the Social Security Administration (SSA) office here was arrested by Federal Protective Service (FPS) agents after he appeared in person at the federal building and became hostile and verbally abusive toward federal workers.

Larry R. Hutchens was arrested at the federal building at 575 N. Pennsylvania and turned over to the Indianapolis Police Department and charged with criminal trespass.

Hutchens, who has a history of displaying hostile and disruptive behavior, had twice received letters from the SSA prohibiting him from ever appearing in person to conduct business with the agency. When Hutchens showed up in person Monday at the SSA office in defiance of this instruction, he began using profanity and displaying aggressive and disorderly conduct, FPS agents responded immediately to arrest Hutchens and take him into custody.

“Our job is to ensure that all government employees are protected as they go to work each day,” said Cherie McLendon, FPS Threat Management Chief in Chicago. “No one has a right to abuse, intimidate, harass or threaten civil servants. Every threat is taken seriously and we will use all our police authorities to provide safe workplaces for federal workers.”

FPS, a division of ICE, protects and secures more than one million tenants and daily visitors at federal facilities nationwide.

Inside ICE

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

Chertoff Visits ICE



Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Michael Chertoff visited ICE Headquarters in Washington, D.C., February 25. He praised ICE employees for their accomplishments and said that they are in the front line of the efforts to protect America. It was Chertoff's first visit to ICE since being sworn in as the Secretary of DHS February 15.