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Immigration Raid Yields 62 Arrests in Illinois

By LIBBY SANDER

CHICAGO, April 4 — [Immigration](#) agents arrested two managers and 60 other employees of an industrial cleaning company Wednesday on immigration violations and charges of identity theft in an early morning raid at a meatpacking plant in central Illinois.

The operation was the latest in a string of raids by agents from Immigration and Customs Enforcement on companies accused of employing illegal immigrants who, in some cases, are alleged to have stolen the identities of American citizens to create false identification documents.

The raid occurred at 1:30 a.m. at Cargill Meat Solutions in Beardstown, a town of 6,000 people northwest of Springfield, where the cleaning company, Quality Service Integrity Inc., was under contract to clean Cargill's pork processing plant.

The two managers, who officials said are Mexicans in the United States illegally, and 11 of the workers arrested Wednesday were charged with aggravated identity theft. Identity theft charges were brought against 14 additional employees of the cleaning service, but they have not yet been arrested, said Gail Montenegro, a spokeswoman for the immigration agency.

Forty-nine employees were taken into custody for alleged immigration violations. In all, 54 of the 62 people arrested are from Mexico; 5 are from Guatemala; 2 from El Salvador and 1 from Argentina, Ms. Montenegro said.

Eleven of the workers taken into custody were released on humanitarian grounds, officials said.

Neither Cargill nor any of the 2,200 employees at its Beardstown facility were objects of the investigation, officials said.

The two managers are Gerardo Dominguez-Chacon, who manages the cleaning company's Beardstown operation, and Maria del Pilar Marroquin de Ramirez, the company's personnel administrator. Both are charged in a criminal complaint with aggravated identity theft and with "aiding and abetting aggravated identity theft in connection with the alleged hiring of illegal immigrants." If convicted, they face at least two years in prison.

Prosecutors said that the two managers knowingly hired illegal immigrants and that Mr. Dominguez-Chacon provided new employees with stolen identities and gave illegal immigrants information on how to obtain false identification documents.

The cleaning service is described on a company Web site as a member of the Vincit Group, which is based in Chattanooga, Tenn. A woman answering the telephone at Vincit said no one was available to comment.

The investigation into the cleaning company's hiring practices began in January, officials said, and revealed that most of the company's work force was illegal immigrants.

In December, immigration agents raided six meat-processing plants operated by Swift and Company in six states, detaining 1,282 immigrants believed to be in the country illegally and charging 219 so far, mostly with identity theft.

Since the Swift raids, smaller raids have occurred in many states. Immigration authorities say they are stepping up efforts to go after companies that engage in the trafficking of false and stolen documents used by illegal immigrants to obtain employment.

Last week, agents arrested 69 immigrants placed by a temporary job agency, Jones Industrial Network, at work sites in the Baltimore area. In early March, more than 360 people, including the owner and three managers, were arrested at Michael Bianco Inc., a leather goods manufacturer in New Bedford, Mass.

Three days after the Massachusetts raid, charges were brought against the president of Sun Drywall and Stucco, an Arizona construction company, and seven managers accused of hiring illegal immigrants.

And in Michigan, federal prosecutors brought charges in February against three executives of Rosenbaum-Cunningham International, a cleaning and maintenance company, alleging that the three defrauded the federal government of more than \$18 million in employment taxes owed on behalf of hundreds of illegal immigrant workers. Nearly 200 immigrant workers in 17 states and the District of Columbia were arrested as part of the investigation.

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