

## U.S. Plans to Deport All Undocumented by 2012

Contributed by Peter Micek, New America Media  
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SAN FRANCISCO -- Recent nets cast by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) captured hundreds of undocumented immigrants at worksites nationwide. In their wake, say immigrant rights advocates, family members and attorneys for those arrested struggle to find their loved ones and clients. As ICE expands, though, so will the deportations, the so-called "golden measure" of its success.

SAN FRANCISCO -- Recent nets cast by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) captured hundreds of undocumented immigrants at worksites nationwide. In their wake, say immigrant rights advocates, family members and attorneys for those arrested struggle to find their loved ones and clients. As ICE expands, though, so will the deportations, the so-called "golden measure" of its success.

On April 17, 311 immigrants were taken into custody at Pilgrim's Pride poultry plants in five states: Mount Pleasant, Texas; Live Oak, Fla.; Chattanooga, Tenn.; Batesville, Ark.; Moorefield, W. Virg. The Pilgrim's Pride raids were the largest of 11 worksite raids conducted by ICE agents that day.

The raids on worksites, along with the growing number of "fugitive operations teams" that pursue individuals with removal orders and a program that increases local police cooperation in immigration enforcement, are "creating an incredible climate of fear," says Andrea Black, network coordinator of Detention Watch Network, a national coalition of individuals and nearly 100 groups advocating humane reform of the U.S. immigration detention and deportation system. Black and Paromita Shah of the National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild spoke during Access Washington, a regular conference call with immigration experts and ethnic media reporters convened by New America Media.

The raids form part of "Operation Endgame," ICE's strategic plan for "removing all removable aliens" by 2012. They come after years of increased emphasis on enforcement of federal immigration law, according to Black. "There has been a huge ramping up of resources to make this happen."

ICE is the second largest law enforcement agency in the country, Black says. In FY 2007, her group reports, ICE made nearly 5,000 arrests as part of its worksite enforcement program. That follows a seven-fold increase in worksite arrests between 2002 and 2006. In addition, activists report anecdotal evidence of arrests at bus and train stations, DMV offices, and as a result of individual tips. ICE held an average of 30,000 detainees per day last year at a cost of \$1.2 million dollars, or \$95 per bed per day.

The methods of ICE in conducting raids and detainments came under fire during the conference call with experts and ethnic media reporters on Apr. 22.

Those detained in the raids are quickly transferred all over the country, according to Shah of the National Immigration Project. Families try in vain to locate their missing members, and, for instance, "have much trouble trying to ensure heart medication reaches their loved ones," Shah recounts. It is difficult to satisfy medical needs and shoulder the responsibilities, such as caring for the elderly, of those detained.

She and other advocates tried to get information through the proper channels, Shah says. "ICE has a hotline, but it hasn't worked. Information on family members could not be provided."

A lack of bed space in detention centers explains most of the transfers, says Andrea Black. But there have been some instances where advocates and detainees claimed they were moved in retaliation for their actions, she adds. When detainee Victoria Arellano died in detention in San Pedro, Calif., due to a lack of medical care, fellow detainees protested. ICE moved them to other centers so investigators couldn't get their reports on the death, Black says.

Shah identified other challenges posed by the detentions. For detainees and their family to get correct legal information and representation is not easy in the opaque ICE hearing process. In violation of the law, Shah says, "People aren't allowed to have counsel during this time when immigration proceedings are allegedly practiced."

Some employers are treated as partners in the raids, while others are arrested.

"(Immigration authorities) claim they're going after employers," Detention Watch Network coordinator Black said. "They say, 'We're trying to support workers' rights, because when undocumented are brought in, they're exploited.' But in many places ICE raids are targeting employees."

When 20 workers were taken on Apr. 11 from the Shipley D-Nuts plant in Houston, ICE released no information

regarding charges against supervisors. Only in a series of strikes against a chain of Mexican restaurants in western New York, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Ohio, where 45 immigrants were caught, were the owner of the chain and nine of his managers apprehended.

In the Pilgrim's Pride case, says Andrea Black, "The company fully complied with ICE. I don't know details of Mexican restaurants raids, but they came at it from a different approach."

ICE plans to grow. It currently has 75 "fugitive operations teams," and budget approval for another 29. It is requesting a budget increase of 95 million for FY 2009, which includes 1,000 additional detention beds. But its mission remains the same. The "golden measure" of ICE's success, according to a 2003 statement by Anthony S. Tangeman, director of the Office of Detention and Deportation, is the removal all "aliens."

Source: New America Media.