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**U.S. CHARGES 21 DEFENDANTS IN ALLEGED FRAUDULENT IDENTIFICATION
DOCUMENT RING BASED IN CHICAGO'S LITTLE VILLAGE COMMUNITY**

CHICAGO – Four days after federal agents dismantled an alleged multi-million-dollar organization that manufactured and sold counterfeit identification documents in Chicago's Little Village neighborhood in April 2007, one of the leaders of a competing crew gave the signal that the "miqueros" – street vendors – under his supervision could start working again. With the competition shut down, leaders of the crew still operating along 26th Street, seized the opportunity to increase their profits by raising prices. And, even though the situation had calmed enough to resume sales, the alleged crew boss believed that it was still too risky for him personally to make any trips to the street or the manufacturing office, according to new federal charges.

The once-bustling counterfeit identification document business along 26th Street in Little Village was disrupted again yesterday when U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents began arresting up to 21 new defendants who allegedly conspired to create and sell fraudulent identification documents as part of the "St. Louis crew," which operated in the vicinity of 26th Street and St. Louis Avenue. Seventeen months ago, nearly two dozen alleged members of the "Albany

crew” were arrested for similarly trafficking in counterfeit documents in and around the Discount Mall, located at 26th Street and Albany.

The alleged current leader of the St. Louis crew, **Manuel Estrada**, also known as “Manny,” 31, and **Jamie Solis**, a/k/a “Jarocho,” 30, both of Chicago, who allegedly reported directly to Estrada, were among those who were arrested and charged in two criminal complaints that were unsealed today. The charges allege that Solis has been a member of the St. Louis crew for several years, previously working as a runner and manufacturer for the organization. In early 2006, Solis became a mid-level supervisor, reporting directly to Estrada. Their conversations, including discussions about the April 2007 arrests and its effects, were among numerous calls that agents intercepted pursuant to court-authorized wiretaps during the ongoing *Operation Paper Tiger* investigation that ICE began four years ago.

Estrada and 19 co-defendants were charged in one 183-page complaint with participating in a conspiracy since 1999 to illegally produce identification documents, authentication features and false identification documents. A second complaint was filed against Solis alone, charging him with conspiring with others to produce false identification documents. Fifteen of the defendants were arrested since Tuesday night in Chicago, while six others are fugitives, announced Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, and Gary J. Hartwig, Special Agent-in-Charge of ICE in Chicago.

The fraudulent identification documents include resident alien cards (“green cards” or “micas”), social security account number cards (“social security cards”), driver’s licenses, and state identification cards.

ICE agents yesterday executed search warrants simultaneously at five locations: 1) 2456 South Homan Ave., Chicago, which allegedly served as the “office” where fraudulent identification documents were produced; 2) Estrada’s residence at 4057 South Albany Ave.; 3) Solis’ residence at 3034 South Karlov Ave.; 4) Foto Studio Reyes, 2542 South Christiana Ave.; and 5) Foto Davila Inc., 3604 West 26th St. The two photo shops are where individuals allegedly obtained photographs for fraudulent identification documents.

All 15 defendants arrested yesterday were scheduled to have their initial court appearances beginning at 11:00 a.m. today before U.S. Magistrate Judge Michael Mason in U.S. District Court. A list of the defendants and their alleged roles is attached.

“Document fraud poses a significant vulnerability that must not go unchallenged,” Mr. Hartwig said. “This action should send the clear message that ICE and its law enforcement partners will identify and dismantle those criminal organizations that perpetrate document fraud. We are committed to ensuring that our nation’s security is not breached in this manner.”

The Chicago Offices of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. State Department’s Diplomatic Security Service, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Customs and Border Protection, Air and Marine Branch, Detroit, Mich., assisted ICE in the investigation, which is continuing, the officials said.

According to the complaint affidavits, the St. Louis crew operated from about 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., seven days a week, located primarily at the intersection of 26th and St. Louis. According to the Solis complaint, a cooperating witness told agents that Solis reported directly to an individual who controlled that street corner. However, that individual, identified in the Estrada complaint as Estrada, was worried about being arrested so he tried to limit his risk by “renting” the corner to Solis

for \$700 a week. Solis, who supervised the corner, as well as the South Homan manufacturing office, allegedly kept any organizational profits in excess of the \$700 weekly payment.

The crew typically employs approximately 8-10 miqueros – also known as solicitors, vendors or sellers – individuals who stand on the street using hand gestures and verbally announcing to pedestrians and vehicles that they have identification documents for sale. A miquero advises customers of the cost of the identity documents and the location of a photography shop – usually Foto Studio Reyes or Foto Davila Inc. – to obtain photos for the documents. A miquero takes the order, photo, and payment from the customer, charging between \$110 and \$150 for a set of fraudulent documents, and keeps any profit after paying the office approximately \$50 to make the documents. A set typically consists of a social security card or a green card and a photo identification card. If the customer wants a social security card by itself, the charge is approximately \$40.

The St. Louis crew also typically employs two runners, who transport orders, photos and money between the miqueros and manufacturers, and two manufacturers – one or both of whom work in an office actually creating fraudulent documents at any given time. The organization has the ability to manufacture fraudulent state identification cards or driver's licenses from most of the 50 states. Customers most commonly request identification cards or driver's licenses from Indiana, Wisconsin, Ohio, Texas, Illinois or Michigan.

Members of the crew are primarily of Mexican descent, but the nationality of its customers vary. Customers have requested green cards for the following countries: Mexico, Colombia, Guatemala, Ecuador, El Salvador, Jamaica, Poland, Czech Republic, Albania, Russia, and China. The vast majority of the fraudulent document transactions are conducted in either Spanish or English, sometimes with translators. Customers also include Caucasian and African-American individuals

believed to be U.S. citizens. Law enforcement is unaware of any occasion in which the organization declined selling fraudulent identification documents to a customer who had sufficient money to purchase the documents.

In one instance in February of this year, according to the Estrada affidavit, two co-defendants discussed selling nine sets of fraudulent documents to a customer from Ohio, and they further discussed that if the documents worked successfully, then that customer was going to return to purchase sets for an entire factory of workers who were not authorized to work in the United States.

The government is being represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Michelle Nasser Weiss, Andrew Porter and David Buvinger.

If convicted, conspiracy to produce fraudulent identification documents carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. Note, however, that the Court would determine the appropriate sentence to be imposed under the advisory United States Sentencing Guidelines.

The public is reminded that a complaint contains only charges and is not evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent and are entitled to a fair trial at which the government has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

United States v. Jamie Solis

Jaime Solis, a/k/a “Jarocho,” dob 2/14/78, of 3034 S. Karlov Ave.

United States v. Manuel Estrada, et al.

Manuel Estrada, a/k/a “Manny,” current leader, 10/27/76, of 4057 S. Albany

Oscar Banda, a/k/a “Perro” and “Balin,” miquero, 8/10/81, of 2418 S. Christiana Ave., 3rd fl.

Martha Elizabeth Campa Rivero, miquero, 7/17/75, of 4445 S. Rockwell, Chicago

Miguel Castaneda Gomez, a/k/a “Pitufo,” miquero, 1/15/74, of 118 S. 49th, Cicero

Andres Chiquin, a/k/a “Pelon,” miquero, 11/17/77, of 4055 W. 31st St., Cicero

FNU LNU, a/k/a “Betty,” miquero and manufacturer, 3/8/79, of 2456 S. Homan Ave.

Gerardo Guzman Martinez, a/k/a “Chilango,” miquero, 9/22/78, of 3007 S. Trumbull Ave.

Claudia Lara, miquero, 2/13/78, of 2445 S. St. Louis Ave.

Manuel Lopez Perez, miquero and runner, 12/ 8/57, of 4057 S. Albany

Ulyses Martinez, a/k/a “Cuaderno,” miquero, 12/18/74, of 2530 S. Spaulding

Hector Medina, a/k/a “Primo,” miquero, runner, office worker, 7/11/73, of 2223 S. Trumbull Ave.

Camilo Mendez, miquero, 7/18/71, of 2635 S. St. Louis Ave.

Jorge Abel Miranda, a/k/a “Payaso,” miquero, 12/31/62, of 2522 S. Trumbull Ave.

Elias Trinidad Munoz, a/k/a “Blue,” miquero, 2/9/87, of 2609 South St. Louis Ave.

Horacio Nevarez Arrellano, a/k/a “Tattoo,” miquero, 5/2/67, of 2349 S. Homan Ave.

Jose Luis Perez, “Pantufla,” miquero, 6/27/73, of 2730 S. Christiana Ave.

Marcos Perez Contreras, a/k/a “Pajaro,” miquero, 5/15/83, of 2635 S. St. Louis Ave.

Carlos Siordia, a/k/a “Rojo,” miquero, 8/13/69, of 2700 S. Christiana Ave.

Jose Texca Cocone, a/k/a “Brody,” miquero and runner, 3/16/75, of 2417 S. Drake Ave.

Humberto Trejo, a/k/a “Chamaco,” miquero, 5/24/88, of 1639 S. Throop St.

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