



Department of Justice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MULTIPLE DEFENDANTS ARRESTED AT POULTRY PLANT IN LIVE OAK DURING IDENTITY THEFT INVESTIGATION

_____ Jacksonville, FL– United States Attorney Robert E. O'Neill and Robert W. Weber, Special Agent in Charge, Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), announced today that multiple arrests have been made at the Pilgrim's Pride Poultry Processing Plant in Live Oak, Florida, in connection with a major immigration investigation. Approximately 27 workers were arrested when they arrived for work at the plant Wednesday morning. Twenty-four have been charged by criminal complaint with making a false statement in a Form I-9, which is a federally-required form that they were required to fill out prior to obtaining work at the plant. If convicted, they each face a maximum sentence of five years' imprisonment. Three have been charged by information with the misdemeanor offense of eluding immigration officers and face up to six months' imprisonment. After completion of criminal proceedings in these cases, including any sentences that may be imposed, the defendants who have been found to have been in the United States illegally will be returned to ICE custody and deported.

Management at Pilgrim's Pride Corporation cooperated fully with Wednesday's arrests. The company has not been charged with any crime.

The names of the individuals arrested will not be immediately available because their true names, in some cases, are still unknown. The defendants made their initial appearances on April 17 and 18, 2008, before United States Magistrate Judge James R. Klindt. They are temporarily being held in custody pending further court proceedings.

This case is being investigated by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Dale Campion.

Both criminal complaints and misdemeanor informations are merely formal charges that a defendant has committed a violation of the federal criminal laws, and every defendant is presumed innocent unless, and until proven guilty.