

Press Conference
The Farms and Honua Kai / Undocumented Worker Investigations
August 22, 2008

Our Federal immigration laws clearly state that only U.S. Citizens, Nationals, and lawful permanent residents can be employed in our country. Federal law requires every employee to complete an “Employment Eligibility Verification Form” at the time they are hired.

Thus, in order to legally work in the United States, all employees that are hired must provide true and accurate information such as name, address, date of birth, and especially Social Security Number.

Employees must also certify under penalty of perjury that they are a U.S. Citizen or National, a permanent resident, or an alien authorized to work in our country. Any false or fraudulent statements or information made by an employee in violation of our laws is a federal crime.

On July 20, 2008, Federal investigators from the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency executed search warrants upon the Oasis Apartment Complex, located at 94-246 Waipahu Street.

At the time, these agents were investigating whether illegal aliens were unlawfully working in Hawaii, and specifically at a company known as “the Farms, Inc.,” a local farm organization. As a result, approximately 43 Mexican aliens were taken into administrative custody pending deportation.

Today, I am announcing that 23 of those aliens have now been charged in Federal Court for violating three federal laws:

Count One charges each of them with knowingly using a fraudulent permanent resident card (also known as a “Green Card”) in order to verify their eligibility for employment in the United States;

Count Two charges each of them with knowingly using a fraudulent Social Security Number to also verify their eligibility for employment in our country; and

Count Three charges each of them with knowingly possessing of a false or fraudulent Green Card.

The maximum penalty for Counts One and Two is 5 years imprisonment. However, the maximum penalty for Count 3 (possession of a fraudulent Green Card) is 10 years imprisonment.

The remaining aliens that have not been charged are still under administrative immigration proceedings. However, this case remains open and pending further investigation, and I am not discounting that others may still be charged in this case.

Recently, our Immigration and Customs Enforcement investigators also learned that illegal aliens were employed at the Maui development known as Honua Kai.

As a result, within the last two weeks approximately 41 undocumented workers have been arrested by our agents on the Island of Maui and near the project --- of which 28 of them were confirmed as actually working at Honua Kai.

This includes the operation this past Wednesday (August 20th), when ICE agents with the assistance of other local, state and federal agencies entered the worksite of Honua Kai and arrested 23 illegal aliens who were working there. Of these aliens:

- 16 were Mexican
- 4 were Brazilian
- 1 was Peruvian
- 1 was Honduran, and
- 1 was Guatemalan

All of these 41 illegal aliens are now in federal custody and pending administrative immigration proceedings. However, this case is still open and pending further investigation and possible federal charges.

I would like to thank you Special Agent in Charge Wayne Wills for the hard work your agents have been putting into these investigations, and for what they are doing in other similar investigations in Hawaii. And, I would also like to thank our assisting agencies:

- State Sheriffs from the Hawaii Department of Public Safety;
- U.S. Marshal Service
- U.S. Coast Guard
- Maui Police Department

For their tremendous help and support with these cases. All of you are making a positive impact in our Islands by enforcing our federal laws.

At the same time, I would like to thank those in our community for stepping forward to report these types of suspicious activity --- especially, in pointing out where illegal aliens may be working unlawfully in our state.

Our law enforcement agencies cannot do this alone. We need the community's assistance and help in bringing these crimes to our attention.

As you can see, from just these two investigations alone, --- in one month, over 80 aliens have been arrested for being illegally working in our state. This is a troubling statistic. But, it is my conclusion from what we are seeing recently, that this may just be the tip of the iceberg in Hawaii.

I am saddened by the lost of thousands of jobs recently from the closure of such businesses as Aloha Airlines and ATA. I am seeing that other Hawaiian businesses

across our State are reporting the lay off of our citizens, and how these local companies had to lay off their valuable employees while struggling to survive.

I have witnessed news reports of how their unemployment is placing such a burden and stress on their families and how this challenges their economic survival. I know that these traumatic events have had a “ripple effect” throughout our state.

And that is why I am deeply troubled when I see deliberate violations of federal law by those who cheat and lie to get our jobs --- or those who would knowingly employ others who are not allowed to work in the United States.

Make no doubt about this, we are drawing a line in our sand here in Hawaii, and I am announcing to all who can hear me --- if you are illegally working here in our state --- or if you are knowingly hiring illegal aliens, you better keep looking over your shoulder because we are coming.

Our enforcement of these laws will be active and aggressive, and whether it is agricultural, military or federal contractors, the tourism industry, the restaurant or construction industry, our investigators will be increasing the tempo of these investigations and looking at all types of worksites to uncover these violations.

Hawaii has always been a place of aloha, where all who came to our Islands were accepted with open arms and welcomed with sincerity. However, our culture and our people do not extend our aloha to those who would lie, cheat and steal from us.

And as far as I am concerned, those who work here illegally or those who knowingly hire them are unworthy of our sympathy because they would lie and cheat in order to steal employment and good jobs away from our people, who are trying to find

decent jobs so that they can feed and care for their own families during these challenging times facing our state.

These undocumented workers and employers of illegal aliens are hurting our economy and our families, and we are going to do something about this.