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Agriprocessors Supervisors Arrested On Charges of Aiding Illegal Immigrants

By MIRIAM JORDAN

July 4, 2008 6:57 a.m.

Federal agents on Thursday arrested two supervisors at Agriprocessors Inc., the country's largest kosher meatpacking plant, on charges they helped illegal immigrants secure fake documents and encouraged them to reside in the U.S.

The arrests marked the first by U.S. authorities of individuals in supervisory roles at the Postville, Iowa, plant. On May 12, Immigration & Customs Enforcement agents arrested 389 workers at the facility, most of them undocumented immigrants from Latin America.

On Thursday, ICE agents arrested Juan Carlos Guerrero-Espinoza, 35, and Martin De La Rosa-Loera, 43, on various criminal immigration and fraudulent identity charges outlined in separate complaints filed in U.S. District Court in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. A federal warrant has been issued for the arrest of another manager, Hosam Amara, 43, who hasn't been located, according to a court statement.

Both Messrs. Guerrero-Espinoza and De La Rosa-Loera were charged with aiding and abetting the use of fraudulent identification before the raid. Mr. Guerrero-Espinoza is also charged with aiding and abetting "aggravated identity theft," according to the court. Both men were detained temporarily until their detention hearings on Monday.

Illegal immigrants typically get jobs either by presenting Social Security cards and other identification carrying a fabricated name and number, or by utilizing the real name and Social Security number of a U.S. legal resident or citizen, which constitutes identity theft.

The court complaint, based on information from unnamed "sources" who worked at the plant, cites an instance in which Mr. Guerrero-Espinoza asked illegal immigrants for \$200 and a photograph. The supervisor, who oversaw the plant's beef-kill section, then allegedly provided the workers with

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fraudulent identification.

According to the complaint, Mr. De La Rosa-Loera, who oversaw the poultry-kill division, allegedly asked illegal workers to secure new work papers to ensure they could keep working at the plant just days before federal agents stormed the plant.

The complaint also alleges that the May 12 raid resulted in the seizure of dozens of fraudulent permanent alien resident cards in the human resources department at Agriprocessors.

An Agriprocessors spokesman said after the arrests that the company couldn't offer any comment because "its attorneys are reviewing the paperwork pertaining to the federal action today."

The May raid marked the single largest worksite operation by the Bush administration, which has recently stepped up enforcement at companies believed to employ illegal immigrants. Most of the detained workers were sentenced to five months in prison for engaging in identity theft, in addition to being charged with committing a civil offense for living in the U.S. illegally.

The raid exposed allegations that workers at the sprawling plant, which employed more than 900 people, were underpaid, physically abused, sexually harassed and extorted. Speaking on condition of anonymity, a U.S. government official who has visited the plant described the operation as "medieval." An investigation is still under way, and a court spokesman declined to disclose whether more arrests are likely.

The allegations about worker mistreatment at Agriprocessors have sparked a heated debate in the Jewish community. The raid has also disrupted kosher meat supplies, with shortages affecting customers from supermarkets in Kansas City to kosher restaurants in Los Angeles.

Write to Miriam Jordan at miriam.jordan@wsj.com

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