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29 seized in immigration raids in Anne Arundel, Baltimore counties

Immigration officials hit 2 restaurants, several residences, office

By Frank D. Roylance

March 12, 2010

Twenty-nine people were taken into custody by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials in simultaneous raids Thursday morning in Anne Arundel and Baltimore counties at two restaurants, several residences and an office.

One of the raids focused on the Timbuktu Restaurant in the 1700 block of Dorsey Road in Hanover and several nearby homes where restaurant workers were housed, according to Anne Arundel County Executive John R. Leopold. Eighteen Anne Arundel County police officers assisted federal agents.

"In this economic climate, when people are hungry for employment, for employers to give incentives to illegal immigrants is egregious; it undercuts our spirit of fairness," Leopold said.

William Winter, special agent in charge at the Baltimore ICE office, said Thursday's action was carried out "to ensure that employers are held accountable for maintaining a legal work force.

"ICE is committed to investigating employers who engage in illegal employment schemes that utilize illegal labor." ICE spokeswoman Ernestine Fobbs declined to provide further details on the raids while the investigation was continuing. She said the people detained during the raids were from a variety of countries. Some appeared to be Hispanic, she said.

They were still being processed last night at the Fallon Federal Building in Baltimore, where they were expected to be photographed, fingerprinted and interviewed as agents worked to determine their immigration status. They would be allowed to telephone family members, Fobbs said.

A similar workplace raid last month in Anne Arundel County resulted in the apprehension of seven Hondurans and drew protests from immigrants' rights advocates demanding due process for the detainees.

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