

Justice Department and ICE reach \$4.5 million agreement with Pilgrim's Pride

The federal government and Pilgrim's Pride Corporation have reached a non-prosecution agreement to resolve an investigation involving the hiring and employment of unauthorized aliens at some of the company's Texas plants. The agreement was announced by U.S. Attorney John M. Bales, Eastern District of Texas; John Chakwin, special agent in charge of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Office of Investigations in Dallas; and Donald Jackson, Chief Executive Officer of Pilgrim's Pride Corporation.

Under the terms of the agreement, Pilgrim's Pride agrees to pay \$4.5 million and adopt more stringent immigration compliance practices to ensure that its work force is composed of employees legally entitled to work in the United States. In return, the U. S. Attorney's Office agrees to conclude its immigration-related investigation of Pilgrim's Pride and any current or former employees.

In a factual statement accompanying the agreement, the parties acknowledge that at the beginning of the investigation, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) had reason to believe that a substantial number of unauthorized aliens were employed at several Pilgrim's Pride plants. As part of that investigation, twenty-five unauthorized aliens were arrested in the Eastern District of Texas in December 2007 and charged with misuse of a Social Security Account number. In early 2008, a number of worksite enforcement actions were conducted by ICE at five Pilgrim's Pride plants in Texas, Florida, West Virginia, Arkansas, and Tennessee, resulting in the apprehension of approximately 338 unauthorized aliens. Thirty-eight illegal aliens were convicted in the Eastern District of Texas for misuse of a Social Security Account number.

Throughout the investigation, Pilgrim's Pride cooperated with the U. S. Attorney's Office and law enforcement agencies. In addition, Pilgrim's Pride implemented various measures designed to ensure a legal work force. As a result of this agreement, Pilgrim's Pride will continue to strengthen its workplace compliance programs and adopt measures recommended by ICE to identify and avoid the employment of unauthorized aliens. In reaching this agreement, Pilgrim's Pride did not admit to any criminal or civil misconduct.

"This case demonstrates that the government and business, working together, can go a long way to resolving the issue of employment of illegal aliens," said U.S. Attorney Bales. "Pilgrim's Pride has cooperated with the United States during this investigation and acknowledged the company's desire to implement rigorous standards to comply with immigration-related laws. With this agreement, Pilgrim's Pride sets itself up as an industry leader in adopting recommended immigration practices. I commend the thorough investigation by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, without which this agreement would not have been possible," Bales said.