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## ICE raids Miss. plant seeking illegal workers

By HOLBROOK MOHR

AP

posted: 2 HOURS 37 MINUTES AGO comments: 0

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LAUREL, Miss. -The federal agents arrived by the dozens, driving unmarked cars and white vans. They sealed off the entrances of a manufacturing plant in south Mississippi and rounded up hundreds of suspected illegal immigrants. By Monday afternoon, 350 people at the facility that makes electrical transformers had been identified as working in the country illegally, said Barbara Gonzalez, a spokeswoman for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. And, she said, agents weren't finished processing the workers at Howard Industries Inc. in Laurel.

So many workers were caught up in the operation, the facility was reportedly shut down for the day. The company produces dozens of products ranging from electrical transformers to medical supplies, according to its Web site.

"This is a targeted enforcement operation that is part of an ongoing ICE investigation that has revealed that illegal aliens are employed at Howard Industries," Gonzalez said.

She declined to say how many federal agents were involved in the raid, but said they acted on a tip provided by a union worker.

In a statement to the Laurel Leader-Call newspaper, Howard Industries said the

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## PERSONAL FINANCE AT WALLETPOP

company "runs every check allowed to ascertain the immigration status of all applicants for its jobs."

"It is company policy that it hires only U.S. citizens and legal immigrants," the statement said.

The company's chief executive officer, Billy Howard, did not respond to a message left by The Associated Press.

The suspected illegal workers were loaded into white vans with shaded windows and driven away as ICE agents guarded the entrances of the massive plant. Some of the agents set up under a tent as sporadic rains swept the area. Motorists traveling on roads behind the plant were stopped by officers in an unmarked vehicle and told to leave.

ICE agents planned to check the residency status of everyone who worked there, said agency spokesman, Brandon Montgomery.

He said 50 people were given alternatives to detention for humanitarian reasons, meaning they could be fitted with a tracking device and order to report to a case worker later.

The raid created hysteria among many in the Hispanic community here.

Rumors that federal agents would begin going house-to-house prompted some families to seek refuge at Iglesia Cristiana Penial, a church with a largely Hispanic congregation, said Pastor Roberto Valez. "We gave them refuge because they were afraid to go back to their homes."

The ICE spokeswoman said the rumors of agents going house-to-house were untrue.

Rodolfo Galicia said his 22-year-old brother was detained at Howard Industries. "Everybody's crying, worried about what's going to happen to him," he said in Spanish.

Valez some of the women detained agreed to leave the country, were fitted with monitoring devices and allowed to leave so they could take care of their children.

A recording at Howard Industries plant on Monday said the telephone switchboard was closed. A man who answered a phone call at the company's security station said reporters would have to call back Tuesday.

Howard Industries was founded in the 1960s. In 2002, state lawmakers approved a \$31.5 million, taxpayer-backed incentive plan aimed at helping to expand its operations.

The raid is one of several nationwide in recent years.

On May 12, federal immigration officials swept into Agriprocessors, the nation's largest kosher meatpacking plant, in Iowa. Nearly 400 workers were detained and dozens of fraudulent permanent resident alien cards were seized from the plant's human resources department, court records showed.

Note: ICE says people whose relatives were detained can call for information: 866-341-3858.

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the best thing to do is to move the whole  
can hire whomever they want and have a slight  
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SLAP THEM ON THE WRIST, AND THEY  
COMPANY, BUT ANOTHER.THAT IS ONLY A  
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EY ARE DOING SOMETHING. JOKE HA HA

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and break the law to get - it doesn't make it  
/ law is just? It's not fair to the criminals who  
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TIME making little rocks out of big rocks!

nly work at jobs that Americans don't want.  
hat has alot of assumptions built into it. For  
s a construction company with lots of outdoor  
can't find Americans to do this job. He just isn't  
ould shorten work hours. He could raise the  
rance. He could allow workers 4 breaks a day,  
very job that it is claimed Americans will not  
arket just like they do anywhere else. Markets  
ons. The idea that every employer with every  
work for him is a bunch of nonsense. If he can't  
country its time for him to improve the quality  
es

hey put out ads and tried to hire Americans at a  
s, than apply for tempory workers that they will  
If one temp worker does not show up, ice  
e out this illegal problem within a couple years  
ly impossible to manage. No rentals, no  
cal....they'd leave in droves.

ne to understand that there is no natural or  
every other country, we have immigration laws  
want to come here. Employers have to be  
in hiring people they ought to know are illegals  
and--in extreme cases--even  
ship this works on individual families. Unless  
jh, I see no alternative other than to continue  
with Mexico.

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