

## OPERATION SOUTHPAW;

### Raid at home construction sites nets illegal immigrant workers

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## **Body**

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The heavily marketed clean, green peace of a new upscale Gwinnett neighborhood designed as "a small hometown" erupted in chaos Wednesday as illegal immigrant workers scrambled through Hamilton Mill in wild attempts to escape a contingent of immigration agents.

Pursued by a U.S. Border Patrol helicopter, nearly two dozen undocumented workers illegally employed on several Hamilton Mill home construction sites fled federal agents who sought to detain and deport them, officials with the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) said Thursday.

Wednesday's raid on several job sites at the edges of the Hamilton Mill golf course are part of an INS initiative, "Operation Southpaw," to reclaim for Georgia workers jobs that are being held illegally by 35,000- 50,000 foreign nationals.

On Monday, INS agents teamed with the Office of the U.S. Border Patrol and began staging a series of raids on metro Atlanta manufacturing and construction sites. By the end of the day Thursday, agents had arrested 527 illegal aliens at multiple job sites in four counties and Atlanta.

INS agents detained 22 workers at Hamilton Mill home sites Thursday morning. Bill Fitzpatrick, general manager of golf at the residential development, said, "Most of the people that work with us came to us while we were under construction. They've been great workers. We asked for appropriate documentation. It was given to us."

But, he acknowledged, "There are other people that were in the construction areas which we don't have any control over."

The raids at Hamilton Mill, Convest Apartments on Club Drive and several county construction sites were made during a second sweep through Gwinnett County. On Wednesday, INS agents detained 41 illegal aliens at the Arbors at Breckenridge in Duluth and Associated Hygenic Products, a Duluth diaper manufacturer.

At construction sites at the Arbors, federal agents pursued illegal workers as they climbed trees, jumped into the river or fled into a nearby swamp.

"They're not our employees," Arbors spokeswoman Stephanie Garner said emphatically on Thursday of the illegal workers who were detained. "They're not affiliated with our companies in any way, shape or form."

At the diaper company, industrial engineering manager Andrew Chu said all employees are required to present their resident alien, or green, card, a driver's license and a Social Security card before they are hired.

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"They all have been documented before we hired them," he said.

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