

3 MEN ARRESTED IN DEAF MEXICAN SMUGGLING CASE

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Body

Federal authorities Thursday charged three men with running an operation based in Southern California through which possibly hundreds of deaf Mexicans were smuggled across the border, kept briefly in a Los Angeles house, then taken to New York City, where they were held in virtual slavery and forced to peddle trinkets. Zachary Carter, the U.S. attorney in Brooklyn, announced the arrests of Andreas Pfeiffer and Lalo Paoletti, whom he identified as leaders of the Los Angeles smuggling ring, and Paoletti's son, Carlos, a midlevel manager.

Authorities described them as associates of the extended Paoletti family, a Mexico City-based clan whose members have been charged with holding 62 deaf illegal immigrants in two safe houses in Queens.

At the same time, officials announced the arrest in Chicago of Pedro Santamaria on related charges of smuggling immigrants. He is alleged to have supervised the trinket-selling activities of a group of illegal Mexican immigrants there before transporting them to New York to work in the Queens operation, which investigators now believe was closely linked to the Chicago group. The arrests bring to 16 the number of people charged in the case, and Carter said that additional charges were expected.

Notes

National News in Brief

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