

5 citizens sue over tactics used in immigration raid

Cox News Service

November 1, 2006 Wednesday

Copyright 2006 Cox Enterprises, Inc.

Section: Domestic; Non-Washington; General News Item

Length: 572 words

Byline: MARY LOU PICKEL

Dateline: ATLANTA

Body

Five United States **citizens** who were caught up in **immigration raids** in southeast Georgia filed a federal lawsuit Wednesday claiming their civil rights were violated.

The Southern Poverty Law Center, an advocacy group based in Montgomery, Ala., filed the suit on behalf of the plaintiffs. It claims U.S. **Immigration** and Customs Enforcement

agents entered and searched private homes without lawful authority to do so during the early September **raids**.

It also claims the agents stopped cars on the street and interrogated and detained people merely because they looked Mexican, the lawsuit says. The **raids** in Emmanuel and surrounding counties resulted in the removal of more than 125 illegal immigrants, according to ICE.

The suit, filed in the U.S. District Court for Northern District of Georgia, seeks monetary damages for pain and suffering.

"They trampled on the constitutional rights of every person of Hispanic descent unfortunate enough to get in the way," said Mary Bauer, an attorney with the center who spoke at a news conference held outside the courthouse in Atlanta on Wednesday.

The suit also seeks punitive damages to deter unlawful search and detention of all Latinos who live in the area served by the Atlanta office of **Immigration** and Customs Enforcement, which includes Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina.

Maria Christina Martinez, 33, of Reidsville, Ga. and her daughter, Justeen Mancha, 15, two of the plaintiffs, said at the news conference that federal agents came into their home without showing a warrant.

Mancha, who was born in Texas, said she was home alone getting ready for school when she heard several men enter her mobile home.

"They started screaming 'illegals' and 'Mexicans' and stuff like that," Mancha said. One agent had his hand on his holstered gun, she said.

"That's what scared me the most," said Mancha, who speaks with a Southern drawl and wore a Georgia Bulldogs belt around her tiny waist. "It looked like he was going to shoot someone."

The **raids** focused on three south Georgia counties and were conducted house to house, searching for illegal immigrants who **used** false documents and worked at the nearby Crider Poultry plant in Stillmore.

5 citizens sue over tactics used in immigration raid

Mancha's mother, Martinez, was born in Florida and used to work at the Crider poultry plant. Martinez said she is filing the lawsuit because she doesn't want anybody else to go through this treatment.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement spokesman Marc Raimondi defended the raids in an e-mail statement.

"This operation was not targeted at any specific ethnic group but was instead targeted at immigration status violators," Raimondi wrote. "All arrests were in compliance with the applicable laws," he said, and were intended to "restore integrity to the nation's immigration system."

The lawsuit also alleges that three other U.S. citizens of Latino heritage were unlawfully detained in the raids. One man was shoved up against his truck as agents searched his house and another was stopped in her car and asked for identification. Agents broke down the door of the home of a third citizen who refused to open the door, the lawsuit says.

None of the five plaintiffs was arrested or transported to immigration detention centers.

David Robinson is the sixth plaintiff in the suit. He claims his property was damaged when federal agents broke into numerous mobile homes.

Mary Lou Pickel writes for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. E-mail: mpickel AT ajc.com

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Publication-Type: Newswire

Subject: LITIGATION (92%); IMMIGRATION (91%); SUITS & CLAIMS (90%); DAMAGES (90%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (89%); HISPANIC AMERICANS (89%); CIVIL RIGHTS (78%); IMMIGRATION LAW (78%); ETHNIC GROUPS (78%); PUNITIVE DAMAGES (78%); SEARCH & SEIZURE (78%); SPECIAL INVESTIGATIVE FORCES (78%); ARRESTS (75%); LAWYERS (74%); PRESS CONFERENCES (72%); ARREST WARRANTS (69%); DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS (68%); POVERTY & HOMELESSNESS (58%)

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER (92%)

Organization: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER (84%); US IMMIGRATION & CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT (77%)

Industry: LAWYERS (74%); MOBILE HOMES (71%); POULTRY PROCESSING (60%)

Geographic: ATLANTA, GA, USA (90%); MONTGOMERY, AL, USA (79%); GEORGIA, USA (94%); SOUTH CAROLINA, USA (79%); NORTH CAROLINA, USA (79%); FLORIDA, USA (79%); ALABAMA, USA (79%); UNITED STATES (93%)

Load-Date: November 2, 2006

5 citizens sue over tactics used in immigration raid

End of Document