

## **FREMONT WOMAN CHARGED IN IMMIGRATION FRAUD SCHEME**

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### **Body**

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A **Fremont woman** has been indicted in federal court for creating phony paperwork in an attempt to dupe **immigration** officials into granting amnesty to at least 300 illegal immigrants in Northern California.

A grand jury Monday **charged** Emma Rosella D'Fiandra with eight counts of **fraud** and two counts of possessing false documents in a plot that lasted from 1986 until 1991 and earned more than \$1 million.

"It was a shopping center of **immigration fraud**," said Assistant U.S. Attorney Steven Gruel in San Francisco. "It was possible on her part to get any documents and back-date them to establish one's fraudulent stay in the United States."

The alleged **scheme** took advantage of the 1986 **Immigration** Reform and Control Act, which offered amnesty for illegal immigrants who lived in the United States for 10 straight years before 1982, the indictment alleges.

D'Fiandra, 50, allegedly churned out fake back-dated receipts, airplane tickets and tax returns to help immigrants contend they were eligible to eventually become citizens.

D'Fiandra would cook those papers in a microwave oven and then dirty them to make them appear older, Gruel said. She also claimed to have known immigrants for years although she had just met them, Gruel said.

Once the resident of a swank \$700,000 home in **Fremont's** Niles district, D'Fiandra is currently imprisoned on other **charges** in a **women's** facility in Chowchilla.

The alleged scam operated out of two businesses, D'Fiandra Legal Services and Laemita Rosella Fiandra Law Offices. She filed between 300 and 1,200 phony amnesty applications in INS offices in San Jose, Stockton, Salinas, Fresno and San Francisco, Gruel said.

Gruel said it is unclear what might become of the illegal immigrants who sought D'Fiandra's help. She allegedly claimed in amnesty applications that some clients lived at her home on Tothero Place.

Applicants paid from \$3,500 to \$15,000 for the fake documents, Gruel said. Authorities think she was starting similar operations in Reno and Phoenix.

D'Fiandra's 48-year-old brother, Carlos Castagnetto, also was **charged** with signing false affidavits, Gruel said. He allegedly falsified his own application for amnesty, swearing that he worked for a farm labor contractor that never existed.

D'Fiandra also held classes for illegal immigrants on how to lie to the **Immigration** and Naturalization Service, falsely claiming that she once worked there, Gruel said. In fact, she came to the country illegally from Peru in 1978, Gruel said. She allegedly used more than 18 aliases and the Social Security number of a dead man born in 1897.

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Authorities learned of the alleged scheme in 1991, after noticing suspicious patterns in many applications.

D'Fiandra fled to Florida after April 1991 searches of her home and business on Stevenson Place revealed evidence of the plot, Gruel said. Among the items found were counterfeit green cards, Social Security cards, birth and death certificates from foreign countries and postage cancellation stamps from a variety of countries used to back-date letters.

She was later arrested in Florida for passing bad checks and is serving a sentence in Chowchilla for that crime, Gruel said. The prosecutor declined to say why the indictment was just handed down.

D'Fiandra is facing a sentence of up to 50 years in prison and a \$2.5 million fine if convicted. Castagnetto is facing five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

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