

MAN INDICTED IN BID TO SMUGGLE FALSE IDS

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Body

A grand jury has **indicted** a south-side **man** for an attempt to **smuggle** thousands of **false** identification documents from Mexico for sale to illegal aliens, a federal prosecutor said Friday.

Frederico Lopez, 25, was charged with conspiracy to **smuggle false** documents and two counts of attempting to **smuggle** them, U.S. Attorney Thomas Schneider said.

"We're talking about big business, illegal big business, the **smuggling** of illegal aliens into this country, the employment of illegal aliens and other criminal conduct that surrounds the activities of illegal aliens," Schneider said.

The investigation began in April when a Louisville, Ky., customs inspector intercepted a package mailed from Mexico City to the Lopez home, customs official Gary Peterson said.

The package contained about 6,000 **false** Social Security cards, 7,000 fake resident-alien cards, and materials for 550 imitation Illinois driver licenses, Schneider said.

Employers would have difficulty spotting the documents as phony, Schneider said.

"I, as a layperson, wouldn't be able to tell the difference," Schneider said. "This is not only a high-quality counterfeiting operation, but you can see there was a substantial amount of materials."

Agents are unsure how many **false** documents have been sold or where, but have evidence that documents similar to the confiscated materials are circulating in Wisconsin, Schneider said.

"As I understand, the sets can be sold on the street for up to \$250 or \$350," he said.

Investigators also discovered 12 kilograms of cocaine at the Lopez home when he was arrested, Schneider said.

Lopez was held without bail and could face trial Jan. 13, Schneider said.

Another, unidentified suspect was in custody, he said.

The investigation involved the U.S. Justice Department, customs and drug agents. The source of the documents and Lopez's role in the operation remain under study, officials said.

Previous investigations turned up isolated cases of **false** identification, Schneider said. One case involved several hundred documents printed in Milwaukee, he said without providing details.

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The Justice Department has **indicted** many illegal aliens over the last 12 months in its eastern Wisconsin district, Schneider said.

In August, the owner of a Mexican restaurant in Fond du Lac admitted employing illegal aliens.

Seventy-six illegal aliens were rounded up at a Green Bay food processing plant a week later. Many were deported.

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