

Groups Protest Operation By Immigration Agents

The New York Times

October 18, 2012 Thursday, Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; National Desk; Pg. 25

Length: 605 words

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Body

An operation by federal immigration agents in Detroit set off protests from Latino and church groups on Wednesday after the officers stopped two illegal immigrants as they were dropping off their children at school.

Agents from Immigration and Customs Enforcement followed both immigrants, who are from Mexico, as they left their homes in southwest Detroit on Tuesday morning, officials from the agency said. Both men had children in their vehicles.

One man, Jorge Hernandez, said he was pulled over by agents in unmarked cars across the street from his 4-year-old daughter's school, the Manuel Reyes Vistas Nuevas Head Start center in southwest Detroit. Mr. Hernandez was questioned but eventually released.

The other man, Hector Orozco Villa, told immigrant advocates that he had been detained by agents near the elementary school of two of his children, Cesar Chavez Academy, a few blocks from the Head Start center. Mr. Orozco remains in the custody of the agency, which is known as ICE.

The presence of the agents spread alarm among arriving parents and children in the Latino neighborhood, school officials said. More than 100 people rallied on Wednesday to protest, according to a report in The Detroit News, saying the immigration agency had broken an earlier promise to avoid arrests near schools and other community gathering points.

"It is very alarming to me to have this happen during the rush hour of people taking their children to school," said Rashida Tlaib, a Democratic state representative who attended the rally. "We are really worried about the impact on these United States citizen children." Several of Mr. Hernandez's and Mr. Orozco's children were born in the United States.

The incident revealed the raw sensitivities in some immigrant communities as federal agents carry out the increasingly complex deportation policy of the Obama administration. Agents have been instructed to focus on capturing illegal immigrants who are convicted criminals or repeat immigration violators, and to avoid detaining those who have committed no serious crimes and have strong family ties to the United States.

After investigating, immigration officials said that the officers' actions were consistent with agency policies.

"After a thorough review of facts, the arrest of a priority target today in the Detroit metro area adhered to, and was in full compliance of, the stated policies and procedures of the agency," said Ross Feinstein, a spokesman for the agency. "This includes ICE policy regarding enforcement actions at or near sensitive locations."

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Immigration officials said **agents** had moved to arrest Mr. Orozco because he had a criminal conviction in 2008 for driving under the influence and had also returned to the United States after being formally deported, which is a felony. The officials said that Mr. Orozco had been detained four blocks from the Chavez Academy.

The officials said that Mr. Hernandez was not a primary target of their **operation**, but that he had two convictions for driving with an expired license.

In an interview, Mr. Hernandez said his 7-year-old son had also been in his vehicle, along with his wife, when he was stopped. He said his son had become distraught and said, in English, to the officers: "Please don't take my dad. We want to go to school."

The episode was reminiscent of a similar confrontation last year when immigrant rights organizations accused **immigration agents** in Detroit of patrolling near schools and, in at least one instance, setting off a panic. The agency determined that **agents** had violated no policies but clarified its guidelines for **operations** near schools.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/18/us/groups-protest-operation-by-immigration-agents.html>

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Publication-Type: Newspaper

Subject: **IMMIGRATION** (94%); **PROTESTS** & DEMONSTRATIONS (90%); CHILDREN (90%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (89%); DEPORTATION (89%); ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS (89%); ARRESTS (89%); CRIMINAL OFFENSES (89%); INVESTIGATIONS (88%); AGENCY RULEMAKING (78%); SPECIAL INVESTIGATIVE FORCES (78%); PRIMARY SCHOOLS (77%); EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION (77%); FAMILY (77%); RELIGION (73%); DRIVING WHILE INTOXICATED (71%); CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS (70%); FELONIES (65%)

Industry: PRIMARY SCHOOLS (77%)

Person: BARACK OBAMA (67%)

Geographic: DETROIT, MI, USA (94%); UNITED STATES (94%)

Load-Date: October 18, 2012