

## **...and a crackdown on illegals**

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### **Body**

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Picture this: Illegal immigrants toiling day after day to help build Atlanta's new Federal Center, by definition a federally financed **and** presumably federally inspected mega-project. Add this touch of irony: A mere 60 feet across the street is the regional office of the U.S. Immigration **and** Naturalization Service, the nation's watchdog against such lawbreaking.

For the INS, the discovery of these ongoing violations under its unsuspecting gaze was a powerful embarrassment, as if the U.S. Fish **and** Wildlife Service found poachers had set traps for bald eagles atop its headquarters. The symbolism hardly could be worse.

But the **illegals** at the Federal Center are only symptomatic of wider abuse throughout metropolitan Atlanta, just about the hottest employment locale in the Southeast. So this week, responding to hundreds of complaints, 130 or so agents of the INS **and** several other federal departments are making a major, coordinated strike against the employment of **illegals**.

Far more is involved here than just arresting foreign nationals with forged or no documents **and** deporting them, although hundreds will be so processed, humanely but firmly, in the coming days. This operation, coded SouthPAW, takes a systematic approach to identifying violations, removing **illegals**, working with employers **and** securing justice for American job seekers **and** also for foreigners who have legal status.

The feds are not focusing alone on the **illegals**, most of whom are driven from their homelands by desperation **and** exploited, at least by U.S. standards, once they get here. One of the aims of the operation is to track down crooked labor brokers, identification counterfeiters **and** knowingly exploitative employers. But INS agents also want to work with willing employers to help them spot bogus credentials.

A fair number of the jobs illegally occupied till this week are in manufacturing **and** construction **and** pay decent wages. The foremost objective of Operation SouthPAW is for INS to empty these positions temporarily so the U.S. Labor Department can fill them with qualified Americans. That's as it should be.

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