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TWENTY-FIVE O'HARE, MIDWAY WORKERS CHARGED WITH FRAUD IN OBTAINING ACCESS TO SECURE AREAS AT CHICAGO AIRPORTS

CHICAGO -- Federal law enforcement agents early today began arresting up to 25 defendants who allegedly fraudulently obtained security badges giving them unescorted access to restricted areas, including the tarmacs, airplanes and other secured sensitive locations, at O'Hare International and Midway airports in Chicago. Each defendant, who was initially sought at home, was charged separately in a criminal complaint that was either unsealed following their arrest or will remain sealed until arrest. As of noon today, 20 were arrested and warrants were outstanding for the remaining defendants. Those charged include ramp agents, truck drivers, cleaning crews, a baggage handler, an airline cabin service attendant and a number of food service workers. Six of the defendants -- each already terminated from their jobs -- were charged with making false statements about previous criminal convictions, 16 were charged with using a false social security number, and three were charged with illegally re-entering the country after deportation.

Also today, officials at both airports deactivated the security badges of other employees whose badges appeared fraudulent, and Immigration and Naturalization Service agents at the airports arrested eight suspected illegal aliens who are subject to administrative removal proceedings.

Today's action, dubbed "Operation Chicagoland Skies" by the INS and which is part of a nationwide program known as "Operation Tarmac," was announced by Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois. Joining him at a press conference were Brian R. Perryman, District Director of the INS; Thomas J. Kneir, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation; William Cotter, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Social Security Administration Office of Inspector General in Chicago; Deiter H. Harper, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago office of the U.S. Department of Transportation Office of Inspector General; Jeanne Clark, Federal Security Director at Midway for the Transportation Security Administration (TSA); Michael Zunk, Deputy Federal Security Director for the TSA at O'Hare; Edward M. Dyner, Special Agent-in-Charge in Chicago of the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Inspector General; and U.S. Marshal Kim Widup.

The operation, which is similar to others undertaken during the past year at other major airports across the country, is aimed at ensuring that airport employees have not obtained their jobs and security status through fraud. The investigations were launched in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attacks to strengthen airport security and to protect the traveling public. The investigation in Chicago is ongoing, the officials said.

O'Hare -- consistently the nation's busiest airport – has approximately 57,417 credentialed employees who work for some 170 companies. Midway has some 27,375 badged workers employed by approximately 70 companies. Both airports are owned by the City of Chicago and operated by the city's Department of Aviation. During the investigation, Social Security and INS agents examined the files of all of the nearly 85,000 workers at both airports who possess a Secure Identification Display Area badge, commonly known as a SIDA badge, and ran computer checks to

verify that they had provided their employers, the city's aviation department and the Federal Aviation Administration with their correct name, date of birth and Social Security number, as well as the proper INS documentation authorizing them to work legally in the United States. At the same time, FBI agents reviewed the files and checked databases to verify that workers given unescorted access to secure areas of the airport had not been convicted of any disqualifying crime during the 10 years ending on the date of their signed photo ID application or other documents relating to the badging process.

The FBI determined that six former airport workers allegedly lied about having disqualifying criminal records -- four for drug-related offenses, one for burglary and another for robbery. They were each charged with a single felony count of making a false statement.

Seventeen defendants were each charged with one felony count of using a false Social Security number, usually a number belonging to someone else. One defendant was charged with illegally re-entering the country after having been previously deported.

In an effort to prevent such fraud from reoccurring, Mr. Cotter of the SSA-OIG said the agency will be providing O'Hare and Midway's badging authorities and airport employers with a direct telephone line to verify Social Security numbers of applicants for the next several weeks. After that, employers can call a SSA toll-free hotline to verify numbers and the Social Security offices near the two airports are being enlisted to provide direct assistance.

"Today's action will enhance the security of our two major airports by removing serious felons with unknown or questionable identities from restricted areas and by deterring others from attempting to obtain jobs at the airports by fraudulent means," Mr. Fitzgerald said. "These charges were filed after a thoughtful and careful review of those who obtained access to secure areas using

false identity information. If we are serious about airport security -- and we are -- we have to know that the people who are given access to secure areas are trustworthy," Mr. Fitzgerald added.

The INS' Mr. Perryman said: "The INS began laying the groundwork for this initiative shortly after the terrible attacks against America. Our goal was, and is, to work with other federal, state and local law enforcement agencies in a joint effort to shore up our nation's homeland security. Identity theft has ramifications far beyond the use of fraudulent documents to obtain illegal employment. The government can't be too vigilant when it comes to airport employees with secure access lying about their true identities."

Mr. Kneir of the FBI said: "Systems designed for airport security, which ensure the safety of the public, cannot and will not be corrupted. Individuals giving false and misleading information defeat the entire concept of homeland security."

"One of the most important aspects of the Social Security Administration Office of Inspector General's mission is our oversight of the misuse of the Social Security number and, by extension, its influence on homeland security," said Mr. Cotter of the SSA-OIG. This operation is a prime and timely example of the seriousness of Social Security number misuse. The individuals involved had various degrees of access to airport facilities and any of them could have compromised the integrity of the security system in place. It also highlights the need for all employers to be more vigilant in verifying the identity and Social Security number of employees being hired in all workplaces, not just those involving national security."

Mr. Harper of the DOT-OIG said: "Our investigations over the years prior to September 11 have shown that people who lie about their criminal records in order to get airport security clearances can pose a threat to public safety. We have uncovered numerous cases of people who fraudulently

obtained airport security badges so they could participate in illegal activities, such as drug smuggling or theft of checked luggage or air cargo. In addition, our audit work has shown that an effective security program requires that only individuals who have undergone extensive background checks should have access to secure areas."

Together, Ms. Clark and Issac E. Richardson, the Transportation Security Administration's Federal Security Directors at Midway and O'Hare, respectively, said: "Security of the nation's air transportation system is clearly an urgent priority for America. Today's action provides an additional layer of security and we are looking forward to more cooperative efforts with the U.S. Attorney and other federal and local agencies to ensure the integrity of all airport workers who have access to aircraft and other restricted areas."

A list is attached of all of the defendants arrested today. Each defendant was slated to have an initial court appearance before U.S. Magistrate Judge Morton Denlow in U.S. District Court.

If convicted, the single felony counts against each defendant carry a maximum penalty of five years in prison and a $250,000 fine. Note, however, that the Court, will determine the appropriate sentence to be imposed under the United States Sentencing Guidelines.

The government's cases are being coordinated by Victoria J. Peters, Associate Chief of the Criminal Division, and James M. Conway, Chief of the Major Case Unit, and are being handled individually by various Assistant United States Attorneys.

The public is reminded that complaints contain only charges and are not evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent and are entitled to a fair trial at which the government has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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OPERATION CHICAGOLAND SKIES
CRIMINAL COMPLAINTS

Note: The following is a list of defendants arrested today and whose complaints are public. The information reflects the best information immediately available as to the person's name, age and last known address but because of the nature of the charges it may not be completely accurate.

CASE NO.	DEFANDANT	AIRPORT/AGE		ADDRESS	OCCUPATION	CHARGE
02CR1169	**CHRISTIAN GARZA**	**O**	23	3040 N. Grenshaw, Chicago	Food service	False Social Security
02CR1171	**EDUARDO PESINA**	**M**	33	2615 S. Oak Park, Oak Park	Food service	False Social Security
02CR1172	**ELVIRA ARELLANO**	**O**	26	1135 W. 18th, Chicago	Aircraft cleaning	False Social Security
02CR1173	**JUAN M. ESCAMILLA**	**M**	49	1540 n. 31ST , Melrose Park	Truck driver	False Statement
02CR1174	**VICTOR GARCIA**	**O/M**	26	3036 W. Belden, Chicago	Exterminator	False Social Security
02CR1175	**MARIA VERA**	**O**	31	3135 N. Davlin, Chicago	Food Service	False Social Security
02CR1177	**EDGARDO RIVERA**	**O**	39	210 Marion, Bensenville	Cargo agent	False Social Security
02CR1178	**ORLANDO ALLEN**	**O/M**	47	5501 W. Ohio, Chicago	Truck driver	False Statement
02CR1179	**FRANCISCO SANTOYO**	**O**	23	9700 Dee, Des Plaines	Ramp agent	False Social Security
02CR1181	**ABRAHAM SOTO**	**M**	26	1654 N. Western, Chicago	Food Service	False Social Security
02CR1182	**EDWARD PINA**	**O**	50	4319 S. California, Chicago	Ramp	False Statement
02CR1183	**DeLEON D. LEWIS**	**M**	27	7702 S. Maryland, Chicago	Vendor	False Statement
02CR1184	**MARTIN RODRIGUEZ**	**O**	32	6523 S. Kedzie, Chicago	Food service	False Social Security
02CR1185	**PAUL B. MOORE**	**M**	30	6438 S. Wood, Chicago	Truck driver	False Statement
02CR1187	**DELIA FLORES**	**O**	32	5017 N. Albany, Chicago	Cleaning service	False Soial Security
02CR1189	**IGNACIO GUERRERO**	**O**	37	1649 N. Washtenaw, Chicago	Food service	False Social Security
02CR1190	**ROBERTO CORDERO**	**O**	59	4960 N. Espouldin, Chicago	Janitor	False Social Security
02CR1197	**ALVARO VEGA**	**O**	31	2704 N. Sawyer, Chicago	Janitor	False Social Security
02CR	**JESUS M. FIGUEROA**	**O**	31	452 Spruce, Palatine	Cleaning service	Illegal re-entry
02CR	**JOSE HERRERA**	**O**	32	1720 Polo Club Ct., Glendale Hts.	Truck driver	Illegal re-entry