

NEWS

National and world news in brief

By Patrick Webster
managing editor
paw175@psu.edu

Government cracks down on illegal employers

WASHINGTON: Federal law enforcement agencies started a nationwide program of cracking down on illegal immigrant employment last week by raiding several IFCO Systems worksites and seizing hundreds of illegal workers.

"We're looking at them in the same way we look at criminal organizations," said Michael Chertoff, Secretary of Homeland Security in a news conference on Thursday. Chertoff also stated that the department would also "use all the tools we have, whether it be criminal enforcement or immigration laws to break the back" of companies that do not comply with employment laws.

IFCO Systems, a German-based warehousing and support firm, had been instructed for over a year to take care for its worker verification and records. A sample of 5,300 workers in the company checked over the 2004-2005 fiscal year revealed that over 50 percent of the labor for the corporation had submitted false or non-existent social security numbers on their tax forms.

"That is, they were using Social Security numbers of people that were dead, of children or just different individuals that did not work at IFCO," chief of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE) Julie Myers reported to the Cable News Network in a special statement. "The Social Security Administration had written IFCO over 13 times and told them, 'Listen, You have a problem. You have over a thousand employees that have faulty Social Security numbers.' And we consider that to be a big problem, and IFCO did not do anything about it."

What made the latest series of raids different is that the operation ended with the arrests of nine top company executives, who allegedly not only allowed the illegal employment to take place but encouraged it. Some reports go so far as to say that company management helped workers falsify state and federal tax forms and openly recruited illegal workers.

"We are turning away from focusing only on civil liability," Myers also told CNN. "It used to be in these cases that they amounted mainly to a slap on the wrist or a small civil fine. We're now focusing on criminal cases and bringing as many criminal charges as we can when we find employers that blatantly violate worksite enforcement laws."

Federal officials reported that the sweep of illegal workers that began last week would be expanded to include the transportation, nuclear power plants and national defense industries.



Source: CNN.com, Yahoo! News

White House staffers resign

WASHINGTON: Several members of the White House cabinet and staff resigned this week, following former chief of staff Andrew Card amid plummeting approval ratings and increasing policy criticisms.

Press Secretary Scott McClellan resigned his position on Wednesday, and Deputy Chief of Staff Karl Rove had his position diminished, no longer actively taking part in policy development.

"I have given it my all sir and I have given you my all sir, and I will continue to do so as we transition to a new press secretary," McClellan stated before the White House press corps in a tearful announcement. "The White House is going through a time of transition. Change can be helpful. This is a good time and a good position to help bring about change. I'm ready to move on. I've been in this position a long time and my wife and I are excited about beginning the next chapter in our life together."

"He's made the decision and I accept it," President Bush said in a brief statement after the resignation was announced.

Rove's movement out of policymaking is also being seen as a move that will allow him to more completely focus on long-term Republican political strategy. The deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget will be stepping up to take Rove's place as Deputy Chief of Staff for policy.

Russian peninsula rocked by earthquake

IL'PYRSKI, Russia: The U.S. Geological Survey reported Thursday that a strong earthquake measuring 7.7 on the Richter earthquake intensity scale shook the Kamchatka peninsula about 125 miles northeast of Il'Pyrski Friday morning.

The tremor was labeled a Major Earthquake, which means that it rated above a seven on the scale and had the potential to cause large amounts of damage. The epicenter of the event took place over 26 miles under the surface of the Earth, and officials reported that it was far enough inland that there was no threat for the creation of a tsunami.

"As long as it's on land, it's not going to produce a tsunami," said Doug Christensen, a geophysicist at the Geophysical Institute part of the University of Alaska at Fairbanks. "It has to be on water."

The earthquake is considered somewhat strange because it did not take place under a subduction zone or major fault line. A subduction zone is an area where one tectonic plate is continually forced under another. Most major earthquakes take place in these areas, making the causes of this earthquake something of a mystery.

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Lacrosse

Following the letter McFayden was suspended from the school, and Brodhead promised a "very, very serious self-study" of the campus's culture. The letter also led to coach Mike Pressler's resignation after 16 years on the job and three ACC championships, including a trip to last year's national final. In a press conference Brodhead called the resignation "highly appropriate" but did not indicate whether he was given the ultimatum of either quitting or being fired. He also stated that the investigation on the school would include a look into the lacrosse team's way of living and a response to the claims of the "special history of bad behavior with this team."

The investigation will be conducted by William Bowen, president of the Andrew Mellon Foundation and former president of Princeton University, and Julius Chamber, former director-counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund and a past NCCU chancellor.

According to court documents, only lacrosse players were present at the party. A court ordered that 46 of the 47 members submit DNA samples to the investigators, the 47th player, a black man, was not asked to comply, as the accuser stated the men who committed the crime were white. The testing failed to connect any of the players to the alleged sexual assault, but two arrests were made on April 18.

Reade Seligmann and Collin Finnerty, both sophomores, were charged with first-degree rape, sexual offense and kidnapping, both were released hours after being incarcerated on \$400,000 bail each.

The arrests, which came nearly a month after the accusations, have

brought on a lot of controversy within the Durham community where many residents feel that this has turned into a racial issue. Preston Bizzell, a 61-year-old Air Force veteran recently voiced his displeasure with the case to ESPN. He's convinced if the alleged attackers had been students at historically black North Carolina Central University, and their accuser white, "The same day, somebody would have been arrested." He goes on to add, "They wouldn't have spent that money [on DNA tests] over at that black university over there just to make sure they didn't do that."

"It's definitely becoming a racial issue, this has been going on for months, and it's turning into a media circus," Streeter stated. He added, "It's unfortunate, no one wants to see that, if that's what's going to happen it's going to divide the community. They should be able to look at the issue and not have the community become divided, they need to work together to solve the problem, no one wants to see this turn into that."

Reverend Jesse Jackson says he can't help but feel that history is looming large over this whole incident, due to white men having a black woman to strip for them.

Jackson added, "That fantasy's as old as slave masters impregnating young slave girls." His comments were quickly debunked by one of the player's defense attorney's, Joe Chesire, who states that the players did not request a girl of color to strip for them, it just happened that way. "There is no slave-master mentality here, and that's just another perfect example of ... self-absorbed race pandering."

Jackson also announced that he would give the victim a scholarship so that she would no longer have to dance exotically to pay for her college tuition.

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Classifieds

"It is the characteristic of the magnanimous man to ask no favor but to be ready to do kindness to others."
~Aristotle, Greek philosopher (384-322 B.C.)

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