



HSTF apprehends labor recruiter in California for alleged worker exploitation in visa fraud scheme



LOS ANGELES — ICE Homeland Security Investigations in Santa Maria arrested three illegal aliens from Mexico and a U.S. citizen for violation of immigration and federal laws on visa fraud and fraud in foreign labor contracting Nov. 13. The scheme involved forcing workers to pay illegal fees and threatening deportation or violence if they fell behind on payments or complained to authorities.

HSI, the Department of State's Diplomatic Security Service, and the Department of Labor's Office of Inspector General, under the combined effort and authority of the Homeland Security Task Force, conducted the investigation.

A labor recruiter named Jorge Vasquez is accused of leading a scheme to exploit migrants participating in the H-2A seasonal farm-labor visa program while employed by JJB Farms LLC and others.

Under the alleged scheme, Vasquez and others in Mexico recruited workers to apply for an H-2A visa to work in the U.S. Vasquez would demand that workers pay large fees in exchange for the opportunity, much of it through deductions from their farm worker wages. That's a violation of the H-2A visa rules and a violation of federal peonage laws. Some critics have described such practices as a form of modern-day slavery.

In one instance, Vasquez told a worker he would charge him \$8,000 for a visa — including a \$1,000 deposit to Vasquez, with the remainder coming from the worker's farm earnings.

Vasquez also threatened to tell immigration officials if recruits failed to comply with the "pay-to-play" scheme or their productivity fell below an acceptable level, and used intimidation tactics, threatening workers' families if they complained or spoke to the U.S. government's inspectors about their treatment.

HSTF is a crucial part of President Trump's mission to create safe neighborhoods for all Americans so that mothers, fathers and children can enjoy the quality of life they deserve, free from the dangers of drug overdoses, organized crime and human traffickers preying on our most vulnerable.

HSTF's success thus far is a testament to what can happen when the federal government puts the American people first.

You can report crimes and suspicious activity by dialing 866-DHS-2-ICE (866-347-2423) or completing the [online tip form](#). Learn more about ICE Los Angeles’ public safety mission on X at [@HSILosAngeles](#).

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