

Feds Expand NC Immigration Fraud Task Force

By Administrator

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RALEIGH – Robert J. Higdon, Jr., United States Attorney for the Eastern District of North Carolina, announced his office is partnering with Homeland Security Investigations and other top-tier law enforcement agencies to pursue benefit fraud investigations and prosecutions.

Established in April 2006, these task forces, known as DBFTFs focus their efforts on detecting, deterring and disrupting both benefit fraud and document fraud. Investigators from a variety of agencies with expertise in different aspects of document and benefit fraud collaborate with U.S. Attorney's Offices around the country to formulate a comprehensive approach in targeting the criminal organizations and the beneficiaries behind these fraudulent schemes.

“Immigration benefit fraud harms everyone who seeks to enter the United States lawfully by cluttering the system with fraudulent applications,” said Homeland Security Resident Agent in Charge Brian Padian. “Benefit fraud wastes government resources better spent on adjudicating legitimate applications. Document and benefit fraud task forces allow HSI/ICE to partner with federal, state, and local agencies to combat immigration fraud, protect the integrity of the immigration system, and punish those who profit from promoting fraudulent schemes.”

ICE partners with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of Labor, Social Security Administration, and various state and local law enforcement agencies on these task forces.

“This task force expansion is another example of a DHS-wide effort to combat fraud” said Roxroy Collins, USCIS Atlanta District, Fraud Detection and National Security Chief. “Immigration fraud undermines the integrity and fairness of our immigration system and can provide dangerous individuals access to our country. Together with our DHS colleagues, we are committed to holding those accountable that commit fraud to enter or remain in the United States as well as on those who prey on immigrants with the false promise of services and benefits.”

“Passport and visa fraud are potential threats to our national security. United States passports and visas are among the most

coveted documents in the world. Terrorists and criminals could use fraudulent passports and visas to enter the United States to commit acts of violence. Travel document fraud makes the United States more vulnerable to crime and terrorism, plain and simple,” said David Monroe, Resident Agent in Charge of the U.S. State Department's Diplomatic Security Service.

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Supporting these DBFTFs is ICE's Forensic Document Laboratory, the only federal crime laboratory dedicated to the forensic examination of travel and identity documents, and its Cyber Crimes Center, and USCIS' Office of Fraud Detection and National Security.

DBFTFs currently operate in 17 major cities including Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Newark, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Saint Paul, San Francisco, Tampa, Washington, D.C./Northern Virginia, and now Raleigh, North Carolina.

During the 2017 fiscal year alone, Homeland Security Investigations initiated more than 601 criminal investigations that resulted in 459 indictments and 445 criminal arrests, along with 254 convictions and seizures totaling \$5,911,875.

Document fraud refers to the manufacture, sale, or use of counterfeit identity documents such as fake driver's licenses, birth certificates, Social Security cards or passports – for immigration fraud or other criminal activity. Document fraud also involves efforts to obtain genuine identity documents through fraudulent means and often supports the crime of benefit fraud.

Benefit fraud refers to the misrepresentation or omission of material facts on applications to obtain immigration benefits the beneficiary is not entitled to, such as U.S. citizenship, adjustment of status, employment, or visas. Because these benefits provide the ability to freely enter, work or reside in this country, they are highly valued by illegal aliens, terrorists, and other criminals.

Using fake documents and making false statements to obtain government benefits and vote in the United States is a threat to national security and undermines the principles, integrity, and fairness of all government institutions, programs, and our national immigration system. The coordinated interagency efforts of the DBFTF in Raleigh, North Carolina, will help prevent future abuses, while enabling the identification of criminals who make false statements, and utilize and manufacture false documentation.