

NEWS RELEASE

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ABI, Local and Federal Agents Arrest Tallapoosa County Couple *Both Charged with Harboring Illegal Aliens, Money Laundering*

Federal, state and local law enforcement officers served federal search warrants on a business/residential compound in rural Tallapoosa County early Thursday morning, arresting a Tallapoosa County couple and taking 24 illegal immigrants into custody.

The arrests follow a six-month investigation initiated by the Tallapoosa County Sheriff's Office and conducted in conjunction with the Alabama Bureau of Investigation and Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The Tallapoosa County Drug Task Force and Alexander City Police Department assisted with execution of the search warrants Thursday.

Octavio Trejo Pitino, 33, and wife Ronda Baird, 37, operators of Rapid Drywall Company, were arrested on federal charges of harboring illegal aliens and money laundering. Trejo and Baird were transported to Montgomery and placed in the custody of the U.S. Marshals Service.

The investigation revealed Trejo and Baird employed the illegal immigrants to work for the subcontracting business. Many of the illegal immigrants resided with family members at the company's fenced compound, which includes a residence, dormitory/apartment buildings and a mobile home.

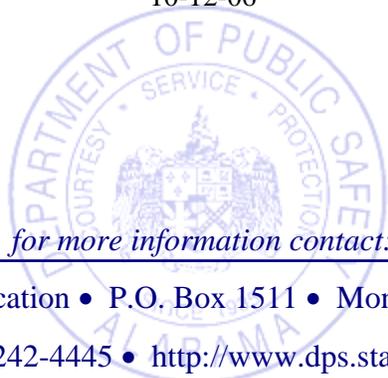
Also arrested was Ramon Contreras Rodriguez, who was charged as an illegal alien in possession of a firearm. He resided at the compound, located off Hicks Store Road outside Tallassee.

In addition, 13 male illegal immigrants residing at the compound were taken into custody on federal immigration charges for failure to present documentation of authorized presence in the United States. They were to be transported to Gadsden for processing at the federal holding facility within the Etowah County Jail. Five women and five children also residing at the compound were released on their own recognizance.

By mid-morning Thursday, officers had seized \$17,000, four vehicles, three handguns, one long gun, and numerous documents. The investigation is ongoing.

The case will be prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Alabama.

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