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March 8, 2007

The Honorable Secretary Michael Chertoff
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
425 I Street, NW
Washington, DC 20536

Dear Secretary Chertoff:

The League of United Latin American Citizens, our nation's oldest and largest Hispanic civil rights organization, would like to communicate our dismay at the ICE raid conducted at the Michael Bianco, Inc. Factory in New Bedford, Massachusetts that resulted in the arrests of over 300 immigrant workers. This raid follows suit with similar raids that happened a few months ago, when over 1300 people were detained at six separate Swift & Co factory locations.

The Swift & Co raids serve as a disturbing example of the heartless strategy being implemented by the Department of Homeland Security. Three months after the raids, the whereabouts of the detainees are still unknown, families remain broken apart, and no legal recourse has been granted (including to those US citizens that were detained).

These types of raids undermine our national interest and underscore the need for passing comprehensive immigration reform. These actions by your department are not making our citizens any safer or stronger, but rather weaker and more terrified that they too would be illegally detained as was the case at Swift & Co and now, New Bedford.

We at LULAC wish to communicate to you the following:

- 1) We call for the immediate investigation of all the workers who have been detained in Swift & Co and New Bedford. Many of the detainees are parents with children, some of whom are US citizens. All of them, however, are human beings, with legal inalienable rights. It amounts to cruel and unusual punishment for them to be detained on a military base and shipped to the shadows of the unknown, far from their families, while their cases are 'pending'.
- 2) Detained workers should have full access to appropriate legal representation. Our country prides itself upon respecting due process; therefore we expect that your treatment of those in your custody be consistent with those Constitutional values.

- 3) Lastly, we call for a temporary moratorium on the raids. While the US Congress continues to seek a solution to the country's bleeding immigration system, with legislation to be introduced possibly next week, we call upon the US Department of Homeland Security and the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement to put a stop to the raids so that the debate in Congress can be carried out in good faith, rather than against a backdrop of fear and repression.

Secretary Chertoff, we formally request that you take heed to our plea and put a stop to the pain and trauma. We remain hopeful that you will do the right and humane thing for our community by putting a stop to these military style operations.

Sincerely,



Rosa Rosales
LULAC National President

CC: Assistant Secretary of DHS Julie Myers
Senator Edward Kennedy
Senator John Kerry
Congressman Barney Frank