

## **STING NETS 18 ARRESTS FOR ALLEGED IMMIGRATION FRAUD**

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LOS ANGELES - Eighteen immigration consultants who allegedly misrepresented themselves as attorneys face criminal charges after a five-month investigation by city officials.

City Attorney Rocky Delgadillo said Tuesday that misdemeanor charges were filed in court, including unlawful practice of law, failure to post immigration bond, failure to post immigration notice, failure to display a sign that the consultant is not an attorney and making a statement that a consultant can obtain special favors from the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Delgadillo said some people seeking legal status in the United States paid as much as \$5,000 for legal help from consultants who promised assistance in getting green cards and other immigration papers. However, some of the victims only received a piece of notarized paper.

"When someone wants to go through the process of becoming a citizen of the United States legally, he or she shouldn't be subjected to illegal and fraudulent practices along the way," Delgadillo said.

The sting involving three investigators from the city attorney's office used undercover video and audio surveillance to build the cases. Authorities said the investigation targeted consultants who helped people from Spanish-speaking countries, including Mexico and El Salvador. Future operations will go after firms doing business in Korean, Chinese and Japanese communities as well, Delgadillo said.

"This new strike force will investigate and prosecute individuals and businesses that take advantage of immigrants who don't know how the system works," Delgadillo said.