



STATEMENT

January 30, 2003

INS RESPONSE TO FEDERAL INDICTMENTS REGARDING DOCUMENT SHREDDING AT THE INS CALIFORNIA SERVICE CENTER

In April 2002, Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) employees of the INS California Service Center discovered the unauthorized destruction, by contract personnel, of documents pertaining to applications and petitions for immigration benefits. The INS immediately ordered the cessation of all contractor shredding activities at the facility and notified the United States Attorney's office of possible wrongdoing. Today's indictments are the result of investigations conducted by the INS Office of Internal Audit, the Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General, and the Office of the United States Attorney for Southern California.

In response to the discovery of the document destruction, those who had filed applications and petitions at the California Service Center but had not yet received a receipt for their applications were urged to call a hotline at the Center to inquire about the status of their cases (1-949-831-8427). Applicants and petitioners who had received receipts during the period in question could also call the hotline to check the status of their cases. Where cases could not be found, applicants were then assisted in reconstructing their cases for processing by the Center. Also, INS re-mailed to applicants all requests for additional information that were sent out during the period in which the shredding took place.

Monitoring of the activities of the support services contractor has been enhanced at the Service Center. All materials to be shredded or destroyed are reviewed first by INS personnel to ensure that no unauthorized materials are destroyed. INS employees now conduct all document destruction or shredding, rather than contractor employees. INS monitors are always present in the contractor's workspaces when contractor personnel are present. All workflow processes at the Center have been reviewed to eliminate potential gaps in document security, and surveillance of the application and petition receiving and data capture areas has been tightened to ensure that every application and petition is processed correctly and is fully accounted for.