

VCF Illegal Aliens RP p.1

Board hears residents' complaints over INS raids in Beach Flats area

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Immigration and Naturalization Service raids in the Beach Flats area of Santa Cruz on Friday served no purpose other than to terrorize residents, Latino leaders told Santa Cruz County Supervisors this morning.

The INS "was going fishing," said Fernando Venegas, a member of the county's Latino Affairs Commission.

Venegas said they was fear because "grown men (INS agents) were running through the streets" after people they suspected of being illegal aliens. "Some of the elders (in Beach Flats) were totally bewildered."

The raids are hurting the efforts of community groups and Con-

gressman Leon Panetta's office to smooth out issues with INS, said Shirley Castillo, representing the League of United Latin American Citizens.

"The raids don't serve any purpose. Those arrested will be here again," Castillo said.

"They just get you because of your color," one speaker said.

INS officials said they went into Beach Flats, a predominantly Latino community, at the request of residents who complained about drug dealing by Mexican nationals.

The INS arrested and deported five men. The INS said they believed the five were involved in drugs but didn't have enough evidence to arrest them on drug charges.

A man who identified himself as "Simba," representing the Ameri-

can Civil Liberties Union, said supervisors can help ease the tensions between the INS and residents by offering bilingual classes and educating people about their rights.

Supervisor Fred Keeley said that while the county has no jurisdiction over the INS, the county can take steps to make sure the efforts of community groups and Panetta aren't forgotten after Panetta leaves office.

Panetta is resigning in the next few weeks to take a position in the Clinton administration, and a replacement won't be elected until mid-year.

Keeley asked County Administrative Officer Susan Mauriello to report back at a future meeting on how efforts started with Panetta can continue.