

CP Illegal Aliens 12/9/87

Santa Cruz City Council calls for end to INS raids

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Aron Castillo testified at a Santa Cruz City Council meeting yesterday that he was standing in the doorway of his Beach Flats apartment a few weeks ago when a U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service officer grabbed him by the arm.

"I was not doing anything, and I don't know why they forcibly grabbed me by the arm," Castillo told the council through an interpreter.

Castillo said the officer asked him for his papers to show that he was in the United States legally. He said he told the officers he was in the process of applying for legalization. The officers demanded to see his papers, which Castillo later produced.

Although Castillo was not arrested, the confrontation had an effect on him, as well as others in the Beach Flats area, he said.

"All of us are afraid," he said. "We can't even go outside for fear of the immigration police."

The testimony of Castillo and others came in support of a resolution by Santa Cruz Councilwoman Mardi Wormhoudt, who wants to stop the INS from going into Beach Flats — a heavily Hispanic neighborhood — and randomly checking the legal status of residents.

Wormhoudt's action follows two raids in the Beach Flats by the INS — one on Nov. 24 when five arrests were made and one

on Nov. 23 when no arrests were reported.

Wormhoudt said the INS's tactics were discriminatory and sometimes illegal because they made "general sweeps rather than looking for an individual when a problem arises."

In a letter to fellow council members, Wormhoudt wrote, "Frequently, (the raids) result in the harassment of people who legally reside in our community and violate the rights of those who are in our country without the proper documents."

Wormhoudt said INS tactics resulted in a neighborhood feeling of intimidation.

She also criticized the INS for not notifying the Santa Cruz Police Department of its activities beforehand — as the city has requested the INS to do since 1984, when a heavy INS presence in the Beach Flats sparked demonstrations.

The Santa Cruz City Council gave its unanimous support to a four-part resolution protesting the recent raids and to try to keep the INS out of the Beach Flats.

The resolution calls for directing the mayor to inform U.S. Rep. Leon Panetta of the recent activities of the INS and to request that Panetta's task force on immigration — formed after the 1984 controversy — look into the recent INS activities.

The council also directed the mayor to write a letter to the regional director of the INS urging the INS to stay out of the Beach Flats and to notify the Police Department in the future

if sweeps are to occur.

Santa Cruz Police Chief Jack Bassett told the council that he spoke with the INS and was told the organization intended to conduct daily patrolling "in and around Santa Cruz County."

Bassett said the city would probably "be seeing more of (the INS) in the coming weeks."

Wormhoudt said in response to this, "Simply being informed by the INS that they will be here is not enough, especially if they may be here every day. I find that fairly shocking."

She added a section to the resolution to see if the city attorney could find a way to file an injunction against the INS for any violations of the law in the alleged harassment and intimidation of Beach Flats residents.

The final portion of the resolution pertains to the City Council members — that they try to attend events in the Beach Flats so their presence will ease the minds of residents.

Council members spoke in support of the resolution.

Councilman Mike Rotkin called the situation "outrageous," and Councilman Arnie Levine said the scenario where people are suspect because of their appearance was "abhorrent."

Councilwoman Jane Weed said the INS actions had the effect of a "siege" in the Beach Flats. "It sounds like a different country. It sounds like a very repressive country," she said.