

Beach Flats sweep leaves residents alarmed

By PAUL BEATTY

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SANTA CRUZ — It was at the hour that the poorer Hispanic people in Beach Flats gather to wait for the food truck from the St. Francis Kitchen to arrive with milk and bread, sandwiches and whatever fruit is available that day.

It was Friday, Nov. 9, and the women, children and men were congregating in the parking lot by La Familia Center for the 9 a.m. to 9:30 arrival of the old bread truck.

Suddenly, a van, four-wheel-drive truck and a sedan drove in.

Many of the people scattered, running

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back to their homes, or trying to escape down the streets and alleyways of the down-at-heel Beach Flats community.

"Migra! Migra!" they were shouting in warning to each other.

Agents from the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service had arrived to sweep up whatever illegal Mexican aliens they could capture in what is the biggest manhunt going on in America today.

Nine people were picked up from Beach Flats. Just earlier, two others were arrested by the agents in the Soquel area, near 41st Avenue and following the Beach

Flats sweep, four others were arrested in Watsonville, for a total 15.

Agent-in-charge Bruce Haakedahl, who runs the Salinas branch of INS said, his agents were acting in response to requests from the Santa Cruz Police Department and "residents of that area."

Police Chief Jack Bassett this morning denied that he had requested an INS sweep of the Beach Flats, "I never had any contact with INS," he said, and that he would check to find out if any of his officers "were acting in this on their own."

Eludivina "Ludi" Guerrero, a counselor

at La Familia Center, said she arrived just after the sweep and many of the people she talked with were very upset, describing a scene where "the vans chased people down the streets."

"One man they picked up in front of the center asked if he could go get his property. The agents followed him and found four women asleep in the house and arrested them."

Agent Haakedahl says that is allowed by law.

Guerrero says she worries that the per-

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sons who are arrested are handcuffed, put in the vans and then are passengers when the van goes after others.

"They could be injured in those dangerous chases."

Haakedahl says the handcuffs are removed after the persons are put in the vans.

Guerrero says the tension in the Mexican community during and after a sweep reminds her of childhood in Texas when a rabid dog would enter a neighborhood.

"People would shout 'perro con la rabia,' and we would be afraid to go out; there would be a nervousness, a tension in

the air. People should know this is happening in America right now. They don't know it. They don't know that there are people here who have to be so afraid of other people. It's been happening for 30 years. It goes on."

Agent Haakedahl said the sweep was not specifically timed to coincide with the people gathering to get food. "We just receive intelligence about when it would be a good time to do it. We received a lot of information from down there and a lot of information from the police department that they were having a lot of problems with undocumented people and gangs.

"The soup lines were just coincidental."