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Postville plant supervisor faces prison term

BY GRANT SCHULTE • GSCHULTE@DMREG.COM • AUGUST 21, 2008[Read Comments\(1\)](#) [Recommend](#) [Print this page](#) [E-mail this article](#)SHARE THIS ARTICLE: [Del.icio.us](#) [Facebook](#) [Digg](#) [Reddit](#) [Newsvine](#) [What's this?](#)

Cedar Rapids, Ia. - A floor manager from Agriprocessors Inc. could serve seven years or more in federal prison for helping his employer hire illegal immigrants at the kosher meat-processing plant in Postville.

Juan Carlos Guerrero-Espinoza, 35, pleaded guilty Wednesday to two charges stemming from his role in the illegal-worker operation that was exposed during an immigration raid in May.

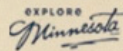
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"Yes, your honor," Guerrero-Espinoza said when asked if he had knowingly hired illegal immigrants.

The plea came three months after federal agents raided the meatpacking plant and detained 389 workers. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents later described their operation as the largest single-site raid in U.S. history.

Guerrero-Espinoza was charged in May in a follow-up sweep through the plant. Another supervisor, Martin De La Rosa-Loera, is still awaiting trial.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Peter Deegan Jr. said the sentence could range from four to five years, but

prosecutors will request an extra 24 months in prison to account for dismissed and uncharged crimes.

Deegan declined to reveal the number of illegal immigrants Guerrero-Espinoza hired, but court papers have said the number was more than 10.

The two charges - conspiracy to hire illegal aliens, and aiding and abetting the hiring of illegal aliens - each carry a maximum five-year prison sentence, up to three years of probation, a maximum \$250,000 fine and a \$100 surcharge.

The pleas could hurt Guerrero-Espinoza's ability to stay in the country after his prison term, said U.S. Magistrate Judge Jon Scoles. The defense attorney, Mark Rotert, said his client is a legal immigrant, and he stressed that Wednesday's hearing had no direct bearing on Guerrero-Espinoza's residency.

Guerrero-Espinoza, who supervised the plant's beef kill department, allegedly told workers a few days before the raid that they needed new identification papers and Social Security numbers to stay employed.

Guerrero-Espinoza will stay in the Bremer County Jail until his sentencing.

Rotert told Scoles he plans to argue for a lesser punishment during his client's sentencing hearing. He declined to comment further after Wednesday's hearing.



Juan Carlos Guerrero-Espinoza heads for his court appearance Wednesday in Cedar Rapids on charges tied to the Agriprocessors case.

(HARRY BAUMERT/THE REGISTER)

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Meanwhile, Sen. Charles Grassley asked Iowa Attorney General Tom Miller on Wednesday for expedited consideration of the 57 child labor violations that have been referred to his office by the Iowa Department of Labor. Grassley sent the letter with U.S. Rep. Tom Latham, whose district includes Postville.

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