FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, October 2, 2017

Two Delano Residents Plead Guilty In Unemployment Insurance Scheme

FRESNO, Calif. —Raul Oropeza Lopez, 50, and Ana Maria Oropeza, 43, both of Delano, California, pleaded guilty today to mail fraud, United States Attorney Phillip A. Talbert announced.

According to court documents, Raul Oropeza Lopez obtained social security numbers, names, and other personal identifying information of U.S. citizens and legal residents and then fraudulently used such information to provide undocumented workers with false identities required to work in the United States as farm laborers. Then, when the undocumented workers were laid off at the end of the growing season, Lopez and his wife filed fraudulent unemployment insurance claims in the names of the assumed identities, fraudulently relying on the work performed by the undocumented workers to claim unemployment insurance benefits for the Lopezes' benefit. Over a period of six years, Lopez and his wife submitted more than 520 fraudulent unemployment insurance claims on behalf of over 70 individuals, collecting at least $1.3 million.

This case was the product of a joint investigation by the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General; Homeland Security Investigations; Social Security Administration, Office of Inspector General; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; U.S. Postal Inspection Service; and the California Employment Development Department, Criminal Investigations Division. Assistant United States Attorney Mark J. McKeon is prosecuting the case.

The defendants are scheduled to be sentenced by Judge Lawrence J. O'Neill on January 29, 2018. Each defendant faces a maximum statutory penalty of 20 years in prison and a $250,000 fine. The actual sentence, however, will be determined at the discretion of the court after consideration of any applicable statutory factors and the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of variables.

####