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## Lawyer For Haverhill Man Detained by Immigration Agents Reveals Story

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*Attorney Petronila Veras-Rizwan of Lynn. (Courtesy photograph.)*

An Ecuadorean man, now conclusively identified by WHAV as the target of a U.S. immigration raid at a Main Street apartment last month, has been released on a \$4,000 bond by a Boston immigration judge.

The early-30s man, who has lived in Haverhill for more than 10 years, was targeted by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency—known as ICE—during one of at least two recent raids. Contrary to established protocols, ICE activity was apparently undertaken without the knowledge of the Haverhill Police Department. Local reports of ICE raids, first made public by Haverhill City Councilor Andy Vargas Feb. 16, had been met in some quarters with skepticism. The detained man's lawyer, Petronila Veras-Rizwan of Lynn, however, confirmed details in an exclusive interview with WHAV Thursday.

“ICE actually entered the apartment without consent and started looking through bedroom doors. My client’s door was actually ajar and they actually came in without permission,” Veras-Rizwan said.

WHAV has agreed not to identify the man by name because of his fear of retaliation for speaking with the press. He is in a relationship with another Ecuadorean woman and they have two U.S.-born children—a three-year-old girl and a six-month-old boy. While the parents entered the country illegally, the children are U.S. citizens by virtue of the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Veras-Rizwan, associated with the firm of Murray and Associates, said her client was not the original target of the Valentine’s Day raid. Instead, she said, ICE pulled over an automobile driven by a target who lives in the same building. An agent then commandeered the car.

“They had him move over and drove the car to his house.” ICE agents entered the home as the family was getting their daughter ready for pre-school, the lawyer said.

“You have a constitutional right—your home is your castle. He didn’t give them permission to go into his room. They just went in.”

She said her client does not have a record as a violent criminal—the justification cited by the Trump administration for the raids—but years ago served probation for driving-related offenses. As an alien, she explained, he was ineligible for a driver’s license. He was first taken to the ICE field office in Burlington, and then transferred to the Plymouth County Correctional Facility, Plymouth.

Asked to speculate why ICE chose Haverhill to conduct a raid, Veras-Rizwan said, “What I’ve heard is that they just target areas where they know there’s illegal immigrants, and then they just go and then they just start asking them questions.”

ICE’s first recent appearance in Haverhill was a week earlier, on Feb. 8, when three other people were detained, Veras-Rizwan said.

Although the man’s companion also entered the country illegally, she was not held. The attorney speculated the presence of children complicated the matter.

“The children would have to be placed into DCF custody, which is a state agency, and then it might come out that they’re doing these raids.”

### *Haverhill Police: ICE Did Not Notify the Department*

On that point, WHAV asked Haverhill police about the secret operation.

“It’s unusual we would not be notified,” said Detective Lt. Robert P. Pistone, police spokesman. “The Haverhill Police Department has no knowledge of ICE being in the city in the last 30 days—detaining or picking anyone up.” Although contrary to protocols used in the past, he said, no agency is mandated to inform the department.

Asked if she believes the Obama Administration would have also conducted such a raid, the lawyer responded, “No, this is definitely because of Trump. Our caseloads have gone up. People are afraid.”

Raising the \$4,000 bond was not easy, she said. In the end, family members and parishioners at a Haverhill church came up with the money. The bond was arranged by attorney Tamara Murray, head of the law firm. A hearing before Judge Day is expected within two weeks.

“We’re going to ask for a cancellation of removal based on the fact that he has two U.S.-born children.”

Besides the children, Veras-Rizwan said, another ground for stopping any deportation hearing is the man’s presence in the country for more than 10 years. Because of the backlog of immigration cases, she believes final rulings aren’t expected until 2019 or 2020.

Because of the length of time involved, immigration law requires issuance of a work authorization and, therefore, a social security number. Once he has a social security number, the man will be able to legally obtain a driver’s license, she said.