Texas police find 17 undocumented immigrants locked inside hot trailer

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Police in Edinburg, Texas on Sunday recovered a group of 17 undocumented immigrants at a Flying J gas station who had been locked inside a hot tractor-trailer for more than eight hours. According to reporters, no ambulances were on the scene and police have not reported any injuries or casualties. The group of immigrants were then detained and loaded onto Border Patrol vans.

The immigrants were from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and Romania. The owners of the tractor-trailer, a male and female of Cuban nationality, were taken into custody.

According to police, they received a call from an unknown individual from Mexico sometime before 11 a.m., who reported that a relative was trapped inside a parked tractor-trailer. The caller said the relative was with other immigrants who were fighting heat exhaustion and were trapped inside the 18-wheeler truck.

When police arrived at the gas station they began knocking on all the tractor-trailers in the park, until they heard one of the trailers knock back from the inside. The group had been trapped for more than 8 hours as temperatures reached 102 degrees over the weekend.

Edinburg police gave water and pizza to the survivors. None reportedly required medical assistance and they were loaded into vans for likely deportation. Border Patrol, Homeland Security, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) then took over the investigation and promised to launch an investigation into the human smuggling operation.

However, Homeland Security Investigations agent Nina Pruñeda declared, “It’s too early to speculate who is involved.”

The incident, which easily could have ended in tragedy, comes less than a month after 8 immigrants were found dead inside a tractor trailer in a Walmart parking lot in San Antonio, Texas. Two more immigrants later died from heat exhaustion at the hospital.

The driver of the tractor, James Matthew Bradley Jr., has now been charged with one count of transporting illegal immigrants in federal court on Monday. If convicted he could get the death penalty or life in prison and a $250,000 fine. Bradley has claimed he did not know they were people trapped inside his trailer and once he realized he tried to help them.

Whatever the exact circumstances of the San Antonio tragedy, the real blame should be placed on American capitalism and its twin parties, the Democrats and Republicans, who have engaged in anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies for decades.

The near tragedy in Edinburg should serve as a reminder of the inhuman conditions forced upon immigrants internationally as they face poverty, violence and war. How many more trailers are filled with precious human “cargo” in 21st century America and around the world is impossible to know.

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