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MARIO G. REYES/Rafu Shimp

Muslims pray during a protest in front of the offices of the Immigration and Naturalization Service Friday.

## Monitors Observe INS Registration Deadline

Deadline passes for men from countries including Afghanistan, North Korea to register with the government.

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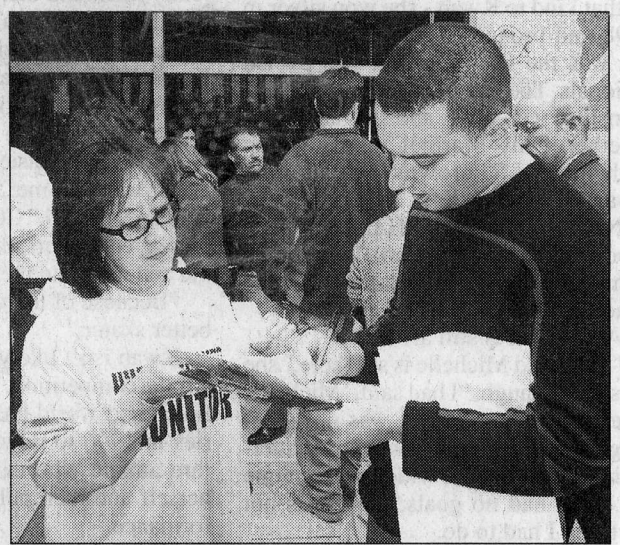
Fear and confusion reigned Friday in many of the city's immigrant communities as the second deadline passed for the registration of an additional 13 groups with immigration officials. In front of the downtown L.A. offices of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, independent monitors clad in bright yellow shirts mingled with protestors and people going to the INS for the Special Registration and other separate matters.

Kay Ochi, a member of the Nikkei for Civil Rights and Redress (NCCR), said the organization was asked by the Muslim Public Affairs Council to assist in monitoring the registration process.

"We are stopping them before they go inside to register and asking them to let us know when they come out whether they were treated respectfully," said Ochi. "They are very nervous with what is going on and, actually, they are feeling grateful to have people monitoring."

Adding to the confusion, according to immigrant advocates, is an inaccurately translated version of the registration instructions posted in Arabic on the Immigration and Naturalization Service Web site misleading readers into thinking the issue does not apply to them. The INS removed the inaccurate translation on Thursday but did not extend the deadline, despite some requests to do so.

Most male citizens of such countries as Afghanistan, Lebanon, Morocco, North Korea and the United Arab Emirates who are 16 or older and are not permanent U.S. residents had through Friday to register with the INS.



Independent monitor Kay Ochi of NCCR speaks with a participant in the INS Special Registration.

This is the second group of people who are required to participate in the registration program initiated after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks as a national security measure. A third group, consisting of Pakistanis and Saudi Arabians, will have to register between Monday and Feb. 21. By noon, more than 280 men had arrived at the INS to register. But a spokesperson for the monitors said that hundreds of others had gone to the INS before the monitors' arrival.

People required to register but who fail to do so may be arrested or deported.

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# Monitors

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Immigrant advocates have been opposed to the registration program, arguing that it does not increase security as officials contend. Instead, it leaves immigrants fearful. An official with the INS said the process shouldn't be viewed with fear.

Bill Strassberger, INS spokesman, said that immigrants should not view the program with fear. "Rather, we hope they would see this as their responsibility to comply with U.S. immigration laws," said Strassberger.

Before the Dec. 16 deadline for the first groups to register, large numbers of immigrants who were waiting to become permanent residents, but who were legally not allowed to be in the United States were detained—some for days—when they went to register with the INS. Fewer accounts of detention have been tied to the second deadline, but previous stories had already made people anxious.

"I'm not here to say that nobody

should be registering, but this registration is reminiscent of what happened to the Japanese Americans during World War II and there's a lesson to be learned," said Jamie Lee of the Not In Our Name Project, which was on hand at the INS headquarters downtown to protest the program, "People who are not being called on to register need to come forward and say we're not going to let them divide us up, we're not going to let them single out."

Ron Wakabayashi of the Department of Justice, Community Relations Service, said that his office is working with organizations such as the Council on American Islamic Relations and MPAC to "give comfort to people who have not yet registered." Both organizations set up tables outside of INS headquarters on Friday.

Alan Freeman of MPAC said, "We are serving as human rights monitors. We are here to be witnesses for the immigrants who are being called in for special registration. We give them information, ask for their names, we help track them and if they are detained we can call someone that can help."