

U.S. NEWS

Father of sailor aboard the beleaguered USS Abraham Lincoln detained by immigration authorities, family says

Joshua Aviles said he has been “fighting for a country that has given me everything,” when he learned his father was detained.

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The USS Abraham Lincoln conducts U.S. blockade operations in the Arabian Sea on April 16.

U.S. Central Command

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By Bill Feather, Dennis Romero and Nicole Acevedo

The immigrant father of a sailor on board [the beleaguered USS Abraham Lincoln](#) was anxiously awaiting his son's return home when immigration authorities detained him over the weekend.

Luis Manuel Aviles was taken into custody late Saturday morning near a Publix supermarket in Key West, Florida, where he lives, as he was headed to a mechanic, according to three family members.

"He was excited because he was finally going to be able to hug his son," his wife, who requested her name not be published, told Noticias Telemundo on Sunday.

A Navy official confirmed to NBC News on Monday that their son, Joshua Aviles, who is a handling airman, is currently assigned to the USS Abraham Lincoln.

The 25-year-old has been deployed [inside the aircraft carrier for nine months](#), which is considered a U.S. military record for uninterrupted time at sea.

Aviles' wife said the father "was very happy, counting the days and weeks until his son arrived so he could hug him. And then, this happened."

Originally from Nicaragua, Aviles has been living in the U.S. for 20 years, mostly working as a handyman for hotels in Key West alongside a string of other jobs to provide for his family, according to his youngest son, Luisito Aviles, and stepdaughter, Katty Delgado.

The Department of Homeland Security confirmed Sunday that Border Patrol arrested Luis Manuel Aviles during a traffic stop in Key West. The agency said he entered the U.S. illegally at an unknown date and location and would remain in ICE custody pending removal proceedings.

"We are simply enforcing the laws passed by Congress. This Administration does not pick and choose which laws to enforce," a DHS spokesperson said.

In an interview with Noticias Telemundo on Sunday, Luisito Aviles described his father as the person who's taught him everything he knows, from electrical issues to how to be a strong person.

"He never hid, he always did things the right way," Luisito Aviles said in Spanish, adding that his father was working toward getting legal status and had complied with his paperwork and visits to ICE's offices.

Delgado told NBC News on Saturday evening that she has no knowledge of an arrest history or criminal allegations against Luis Manuel Aviles.

“He’s doing everything the right way,” she said.

Delgado said that she learned the news from family members, including Aviles’ wife and his son Joshua Aviles, who posted a note about the detention on Facebook.



— Luis Manuel Aviles and his son Joshua Aviles. Katty Delgado

Joshua Aviles wrote on Facebook on Saturday, “I’ve been deployed for over nine months, out at sea in the Middle East aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln, fighting for a country that has given me everything.”

He said that his father is hard-working, giving and humble and that he has a work permit, a Social Security card and a driver’s license.

“This is heartbreaking for me,” Joshua Aviles said. “I don’t know how I can mentally continue working 12+ hour days knowing that my dad is somewhere, possibly being treated like a criminal.”

Asked to confirm whether Luis Manuel Aviles had a Social Security number, a work permit or pending immigration cases, as his family indicated, DHS told NBC News and Telemundo, NBCUniversal’s Spanish-language network, that “work authorization or a pending application do NOT confer legal status in the United States.”

USS Lincoln heads home after sailors complain of poor conditions

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The Lincoln left its home port of San Diego on Nov. 25, and, with more than eight months since it visited a port in December, [it broke the Navy record](#) for time without a port call. Relatives of sailors on board the carrier have described [reports of deteriorating conditions](#) and morale.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has said claims about the situation on board have been “completely misrepresented.”

The Navy said Saturday that the Lincoln has [officially left the Middle East](#) en route to the West Coast, a journey that could take a month or more.

Joshua Aviles, who told NBC News he has limited internet access, wrote on Facebook that he’s doing everything he can to get his father released from detention.

“I love you with all my heart. Please stay strong. I’m coming home, Dad,” he wrote.

President Donald Trump has stood by his administration’s [immigration crackdown](#), including ICE’s expanded enforcement and arrests, which in recent months have [included the arrests of children](#) and [spouses of service members](#), a San Diego Padres [minor-league catching coordinator](#) and [a grandmother from India](#) who’s a schoolteacher with a green card.

Immigration authorities have detained more than 50 parents and spouses of service members during Trump’s second term, [according to a recent Associated Press investigation](#). There has been [backlash to the detentions](#), which come despite programs for military members that can sometimes offer immediate family protection from deportation.

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services [website says](#) those “discretionary options” are offered on a “case-by-case basis.”

It was not immediately clear whether Luis Manuel Aviles was in the program.

The DHS spokesperson said in a statement Sunday that “having a family member in the military is not a free pass to violate our nation’s laws.”

“Military service by an immediate relative does not automatically grant parole, lawful status, or immunity from immigration enforcement,” the spokesperson said.

Delgado lamented that her stepbrother has spent nine months out at sea, without seeing his family, “and this is what his father gets.”



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