



Inside ICE

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The house shown above was used to hold illegal aliens hostage after they had been stolen from their smugglers. Felipe Mendoza-Granados, one of five men involved in the scheme, received a 40-year prison sentence, one of the longest ever handed down in a smuggling case in Los Angeles.

L.A. FEDERAL JUDGE SENTENCES MAN TO 40 YEARS FOR TAKING ALIENS HOSTAGE

LOS ANGELES, Calif. — A man convicted of stealing illegal aliens from a human smuggling ring and holding those aliens for ransom has received one of the longest sentences ever imposed in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles related to human smuggling.

Felipe Mendoza-Granados, 32, was sentenced August 22 by United States District Court Judge Audrey B. Collins to 40 years in prison.

Mendoza was one of five Mexican nationals convicted after an ICE investigation on federal hostage taking and weapons charges. The case stemmed from an incident last year where the men abducted several illegal aliens from a human smuggling organization after beating the smugglers and threatening them with a gun and baseball bats.

“This sentence sends a strong message that there is zero tolerance for the brutal tactics used by those in the human smuggling trade,” said Kevin Jeffery, Deputy Special Agent-in-Charge for ICE Investigations in Los Angeles. “ICE is working closely with the United States Attorney’s Office to combat this ruthless enterprise and prosecute those involved to the fullest extent of the law.”

According to court documents and evidence, Mendoza and the other men involved in the scheme sent a confederate to Mexico posing as someone who wanted to be smuggled into the United States. After arriving in Los Angeles with other illegal aliens, the man contacted his associates, ostensibly to pay his smuggling fee.

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MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO MIDDLE EAST SMUGGLING

A Michigan man has pleaded guilty to two counts of alien smuggling in connection with a scheme to smuggle illegal aliens from the Middle East to the United States.

Minas Mirza, 42, also known as "Jack" and "Nino," of Warren, Mich., pleaded guilty on August 19 in Washington, D.C. He faces a maximum of 10 years in prison.

Mirza was one of four people charged in Washington, D.C. last year as part of an organization accused of smuggling more than 200 illegal aliens into the country. Mirza pleaded guilty after being charged, along with the three other defendants, with smuggling aliens, including citizens of Iraq and other countries in the Middle East, into the United States, primarily through South America.

The defendants were charged with conspiracy to smuggle aliens into the United States beginning in early 2001 and bringing unauthorized aliens to the United States for commercial advantage or private financial gain.

According to the indictment, Neeran Zaia owned a business called Universal Investment & Law Services, which she used as a conduit for alleged alien smuggling activities. The business advertised in Detroit media outlets, including an Arab-language magazine. Zaia and a co-conspirator also allegedly operated "Saudi-Jordan," a travel

agency located in Amman, Jordan, and met there with aliens who wished to enter the United States.

The indictment alleges that Ms. Zaia and a co-conspirator recruited aliens in Iraq and Jordan who wished to be taken to the United States in exchange for the payment or promised payment of money, often for thousands of dollars. Zaia allegedly told the aliens she, in exchange for the fee, could obtain appropriate documents to facilitate their travel to the United States.

The indictment further alleges that Zaia and other conspirators promised aliens U.S. visas. However, after securing partial payments for those visas, the aliens were instead provided with visas from countries in South America. The defendants would allegedly transport the aliens to South American countries as a staging area for entry into the United States. Once the aliens were in South America, the conspirators would demand additional money to bring the aliens into the United States.

In the course of his guilty plea, Mirza admitted his role in the conspiracy and specifically to having

coordinated arrangements for smuggling two aliens into the United States for personal financial gain. Mirza also admitted to personally driving two aliens from Washington, D.C. to Detroit. A sentencing date has not yet been scheduled.

Mirza was one of four people charged as part of an organization accused of smuggling more than 200 illegal aliens, including citizens of Iraq and other countries in the Middle East, into the United States.

In announcing the guilty plea, ICE Deputy Assistant Secretary John P. Clark, U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia Kenneth L. Wainstein and Acting Assistant Attorney General John C. Richter all commended the extraterritorial investigation led by ICE special agents of the Washington, D.C., field office, ICE agents at ICE Headquarters and agents from the Detroit ICE Office of Investigations. The State Department's Diplomatic Security Service also assisted with the investigation.

JUDGE GIVES L.A. MAN 40 YEARS

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On Feb. 11, 2004, Mendoza and his accomplices confronted the original smugglers in a supermarket parking lot. Brandishing a handgun and baseball bats, the men abducted three aliens, stole the smugglers' van and forced the smugglers to drive to their drop house. At the house, the men beat the remaining alien smugglers and then abducted the other illegal aliens.

The hostages were driven to a new location where they were held for two days while being threatened

with death or harm unless their relatives paid the balance of their smuggling fees.

The scheme ended February 13, 2004 when the California Highway Patrol stopped the stolen van and discovered two of the kidnappers and one illegal alien.

Following their arrests, several of the defendants admitted that the gang had been involved in as many as 30 similar incidents. The other four defendants in the case are scheduled to be sentenced over the next six weeks.

Inside ICE is an e-newsletter produced by the ICE Office of Public Affairs to inform the public about the mission, operations and activities of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

AGENTS ARREST 59 IN DUAL INVESTIGATIONS

WASHINGTON, D.C. — FBI, ICE and other federal agents have arrested 59 people on charges related to international conspiracies to launder money and smuggle counterfeit U.S. currency, weapons, drugs and cigarettes into the United States.

Over the weekend of August 20-21, federal agents made arrests at 11 locations in the United States and Canada, including Atlantic City, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Chicago and Philadelphia.

The arrests were the result of two parallel undercover law enforcement operations. They involved unprecedented cooperation between the FBI; ICE; the U.S. Secret Service; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; U.S. Customs and Border Protection; the Royal Canadian Mounted Police; the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the Department of Labor's Inspector General; and several state and local law enforcement agencies.

Following the arrests, federal indictments were unsealed in Los Ange-



Bill Reid, Acting Assistant Director of the ICE Office of Investigations, discusses ICE's role in the operations at a press conference at the Department of Justice in Washington, D.C.

les and Newark, New Jersey, naming 87 individuals in the international smuggling and counterfeiting operation on charges including violations of Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) statutes; dealing in counterfeit U.S. currency; narcotics trafficking; money laundering; conspiracy to defraud the United States; and illegal weapons trafficking.

The two parallel investigations that led to the arrests included:

OPERATION ROYAL CHARM

Six indictments, including three racketeering indictments, were returned in the District of New Jersey charging 57 individuals. The FBI undercover operation revealed that the organization smuggled highly deceptive counterfeit U.S. currency, manufactured in a foreign country, into the United States on container ships with false bills of lading for toys, rattan furniture and other goods.

The containers were allegedly sent by defendants after extensive meetings with undercover agents. In addition, the operation revealed that the organization used the same methods to smuggle drugs into the United States. It further revealed that members of the organization with significant ties to factories overseas were manufacturing counterfeit cigarettes and then shipping them to the United States through the same methods as the counterfeit currency.

In an effort to orchestrate the arrest of many of the subjects in the Newark investigation, the FBI prepared and sent invitations to a ruse "wedding" for one of the FBI undercover agents. Many of the subjects were arrested on Sunday, believing they were going to the wedding celebration.

To date, Operation Royal Charm has resulted in the seizure of more than \$3.3 million in counterfeit currency; \$2 million in counterfeit cigarettes; 36,000 ecstasy pills; and almost one-half kilo of methamphetamine.

OPERATION SMOKING DRAGON

A second investigation, connected to the first by similar persons, resulted in four indictments by a federal grand jury in the Central District of California naming 30 defendants. The indictments allege that several individuals in California were importing counterfeit products, including cigarettes, from a foreign country through the Los Angeles and Long Beach waterfronts. An undercover operation arranged the shipment of these counterfeit goods into California for the purpose of identifying the entire criminal enterprise. Undercover agents posed as underworld criminals who could move these counterfeit products into the United States and Canada.

The defendants, believing they were dealing with other criminals, paid for some of the illegal shipments with counterfeit cigarettes. The investigation revealed that the defendants allegedly smuggled cartons of counterfeit cigarettes worth \$40 million.

"This was a one-stop-shopping criminal organization that had the will and the means to smuggle virtually every form of contraband imaginable," said John P. Clark, Deputy Assistant Secretary for ICE. "For those reasons alone, the organization posed a serious homeland security threat that we are happy to close down today. This case demonstrates what can be achieved when law enforcement works together to combat such threats."

THREE GET SEVERE SENTENCES FOR TRAFFICKING

Three convicted drug traffickers were sentenced August 22 to hefty prison terms for trafficking and attempting to distribute more than nine tons of marijuana.

Those sentenced were Salvador Garcia, 45, and his brother, Jorge Rolando Garcia, Sr., 53, both of Rio Grande City, Texas; and Toribio Arriaga Guerrero, a Mexican national residing in Mission, Texas.

Salvador Garcia received a total of 30 years in federal prison, without parole, for conspiracy and possession with intent to distribute a total 9,304 lbs. of marijuana. Garcia was also sentenced to serve five years for each of 22 money-laundering convictions. He was also ordered to pay over \$7.5 million in fines.

Jorge Rolando Garcia, Sr. and Toribio Arriaga Guerrero will each be serving a total of 20 years in federal prison without parole for conspiracy and possession with intent to distribute marijuana.

ICE Special Agent-in-Charge

Alonzo Pena, who heads the ICE San Antonio office, said Salvador Garcia was convicted based upon evidence that proved Garcia used his property as a passage-way for drugs to be brought into the United States from Mexico.

Once the drugs were ferried across the Rio Grande River, they would be picked up at the landing site on the Salvador Garcia property and transported by truck to various stash houses in both Rio Grande City and McAllen, Texas. U.S. Customs and Border Protection seized a load of marijuana at Garcia's property in November 2003, as well as a fully loaded AR-15 semi-automatic as-



The weapons shown above were part of the contraband seized in connection with the arrest of three men involved in trafficking more than 9,000 lbs. of marijuana into the United States. Those men received prison sentences ranging from 20 to 30 years. ICE agents played a key role in the investigation.

sault rifle; a 1999 fully armored Grand Jeep Cherokee that also had switches for electric door shock, tear gas and smoke screen; and a fully armored 1995 Grand Marquis. These vehicles were registered to members of Salvador Garcia's immediate family.

ICE PROVIDES NEW WEB-BASED SEVIS TRAINING

With foreign students returning to the United States for the new school year, ICE on August 24 announced the launch of a new Internet-based training program to help school officials more effectively use the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS).

SEVIS is a system for maintaining information on international students and exchange visitors. The new Web-based training course is designed to provide instruction to more than 18,000 designated school officials on how to use SEVIS software and keep up with regulations. Previously, school officials had to rely on a user manual with limited scope for SEVIS training.

The new Web-based training course, entitled "SEVIS Training for School Officials," is designed to provide instruction to Designated School Officials (DSOs) and Principal Designated School Officials (PDSOs) on how to use SEVIS software. The course is available online, 24 hours a day, for "anytime/anywhere" learning.

Previously, school officials had to rely on a user manual with limited scope for SEVIS training. This new Web-based training course provides information on regulations associated with the SEVIS data requirements and describes the roles and responsibilities of students and DSOs.

The training is also designed to assist new DSOs who may need additional guidance on updating and maintaining student information in SEVIS. In addition, this course will serve as a reference tool for seasoned DSOs to refresh their skills.

The Web-based training is designed to be self-paced and can be completed at varying intervals and times.

ICE plans to continuously update the modules and enhance its user-friendliness over time. Comments or suggestions can be e-mailed to SEVIS.Source@dhs.gov. Include the phrase "web-based training" in the subject line.

DRUG DEALER MUST FORFEIT \$2.7 MILLION WON IN LOTTERY

BROWNSVILLE, Texas — A Mexican national who won a \$5 million Texas Lottery jackpot is now being ordered to forfeit his winnings since his ticket was purchased with illegal drug monies.

The decision of the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed the convictions and substantial sentence of Jose Luis Betancourt for drug trafficking offenses, and the forfeiture of his interest in the Dec. 11, 2002 Texas Lottery jackpot drawing. The 5th Circuit Court's opinion was issued Aug. 17.

“The result of this case illustrates that those who think they can use illicit funds to further their financial income are mistaken,” said Alonzo Pena, Special Agent-in-Charge for ICE San Antonio. “ICE will utilize every investigative resource to bring those individuals to justice who attempt to subvert the system.”

Two days after the Texas Lottery Commission paid Betancourt approximately \$5.5 million, representing the cash proceeds from the Texas Lottery, minus an amount withheld for federal income taxes, Betancourt delivered cocaine that led to his arrest and convictions. His arrest followed his long involvement in drug trafficking activities in the Brownsville, Texas, area. ICE agents in Brownsville led the investigation, along with the Cameron County Sheriff's Office, and the Brownsville Police Department.

SHIP EMPLOYEE GETS 21 MONTHS FOR ILLEGAL MONEY TRANSFERS

ST. THOMAS, V.I. — A 44-year-old citizen of the Philippines was sentenced August 19 to serve 21 months in prison for operating an unlicensed money transmitting business with bank accounts in Alaska, Florida, St. Thomas and the Philippines.

Chuchi Kue pleaded guilty to count one of a four-count indictment charging her with operating an unlicensed money transmitting business.

Kue's illegal business was first discovered on Dec. 9, 2004 during a routine cabin search on the Dawn Princess cruise ship. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) inspectors discovered approximately \$20,392 in cash, transaction ledgers and several receipts from money remittance companies in Kue's cabin.

ICE agents in St. Thomas subsequently conducted a preliminary investigation and arrested Kue on Dec. 9, 2004 after she admitted receiving money from several crew-

members for remittance to the Philippines. Further investigation revealed that Kue transmitted more than \$255,000 to the Philippines illegally.

“There are laws that regulate the transmission of currencies in the United States and we, at ICE, will enforce those laws,” said Lydia St. John-Mellado, acting special agent-in-charge of ICE investigations in Puerto Rico. “Neither the United States Virgin Islands nor Puerto Rico will be used as a safe haven for those who try to circumvent our immigration and customs laws.”

ICE ARRESTS L.A. AREA TEACHER ON CHILD PORNOGRAPHY CHARGE

LOS ANGELES, Calif. — A former instructor at Orangeview Junior High School in Anaheim faces up to 30 years in prison after being charged with possessing and transporting child pornography.

Michael Timothy Arnold, 44, appeared in federal court August 17 and was ordered held without bond. Arnold, who worked in the math department at the school prior to his arrest, was named in a two-count indictment.

Arnold was taken into custody by ICE agents at his San Juan Capistrano residence August 4. Suspicions about Arnold arose after U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers referred him for further inspection at Los Angeles International Airport in late July, when he arrived following a three-week trip to the Philippines. During that inspection, CBP officers discovered sexually explicit images of underage males and females on a laptop, memory stick and CDs Arnold had in his luggage.

CBP alerted ICE, which opened a formal investigation as part of Operation Predator, a comprehensive ICE initiative aimed at those who prey on children. Subsequently, agents in ICE's computer forensics group conducted an analysis of Arnold's computer media and found nude images of children, including a girl believed to be approximately eight years old who was wearing shackles and a metal collar around her neck.

The CDs also contained graphic text of Internet exchanges between someone authorities suspect is Arnold and individuals who appear to be in the Philippines. In those messages, the sender is soliciting sex with children.

“This case is particularly disturbing because of the highly graphic nature of the images we found,” said Loraine Brown, Special Agent-in-Charge for ICE Investigations in Los Angeles. “Our investigation into Mr. Arnold and his activities is continuing. ICE is using all of its tools and authorities to target those who prey on and sexually exploit children, both here or abroad.”

Inside ICE

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U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.

SYMBOL OF PRIDE



U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Detention Class # 514 graduated from the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center on August 19, the first class of Immigration Enforcement Agents to be issued the new ICE credentials, badges, uniforms and firearms. "We are proud to be taking this step towards establishing the unique identity of Immigration Enforcement Agents within ICE Detention and Removal," said John Torres, Acting Director for the ICE Office of Detention and Removal Operations.