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## News Releases

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DECEMBER 8, 2010 HOUSTON, TX

### 2 illegal aliens sentenced for transporting, harboring an alien resulting in death

HOUSTON - Two illegal aliens from Mexico were sentenced on Wednesday to 27 and 51 months imprisonment, respectively, for conspiring to transport and harbor an illegal alien within the United States resulting in his death. The sentences were announced by U.S. Attorney José Angel Moreno. The case was investigated by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Office of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI).

Aburto-Gamino, 48, and Guzman-Villa, 28, pleaded guilty to the felony immigration offense on June 16. At that hearing, the government established that relatives and friends of the victim received a series of phone calls from alien smugglers demanding the payment of smuggling fees for him and also informed them that he was very ill. On April 27, 2009, the Brazoria County Sheriff's Office responded to a call that a body had been found in Brazoria County and upon inspecting the body, a Honduran driver's license was found identifying the deceased.

ICE HSI special agents initiated an investigation based on information collected from phone numbers used by the smugglers, leading to surveillance at a trailer park in the 13000 block of Hooper in Harris County, Texas. A traffic stop of a vehicle leaving one of the trailers was conducted and agents made contact with co-defendant, Mary Jesse Cuadros, who allowed the agents to search her trailer. While waiting for agents to return from the location of the traffic stop with Cuadros, an agent maintaining surveillance at her residence saw Aburto-Gamino and another co-defendant Lucero Aburto arrive in a vehicle at the location. Aburto, having received a phone call from Cuadros that agents were on the way, ran into the trailer to warn the occupants. Agents arrived at the trailer and arrested Aburto-Gamino and Aburto.

Inside the trailer, agents discovered a "pollo" list, a slang term used to describe ledgers used by alien smugglers about smuggled aliens, contact numbers to obtain smuggling fees, and fees paid to the smugglers. The list contained the names of 27 illegally smuggled aliens. A pistol and numerous cell phones were also discovered.

Agents also obtained consent from Cuadros to search a second trailer. They discovered trash bags and maroon curtains which matched those used to wrap the body of the victim.

Subsequent interviews with several of the defendants determined that the victim was brought to the location by an unidentified smuggler and that he was extremely ill on arrival. Aburto purchased a drink for the victim who drank it, went into a bathroom, collapsed and died. The Galveston County Medical Examiner's Office conducted an autopsy but was unable to determine the cause of death.

Through the interviews with the aliens, Guzman-Villa was identified as having been an alien smuggler for at least two years with his wife, Cuadros, and stepfather, Aburto-Gamino. It was also determined that Guzman-Villa dumped the victim's body on the side of the road.

Cuadros has already pleaded guilty to the conspiracy and is scheduled for sentencing on Jan. 13. She faces up to life imprisonment and not more than a fine of \$250,000. Aburto was charged with misprision of a felony and was sentenced on Aug. 20, to time served, about 15 months. He has been placed into deportation proceedings. Both Aburto-Gamino and Guzman-Villa face deportation after they complete their sentences.

The case was investigated by ICE HSI agents with the assistance of the Houston Police Department and Brazoria County Sheriff's Office. Assistant U.S. Attorney Doug Davis, Southern District of Texas, prosecuted the case.

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