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News Releases

AUGUST 31, 2011 CEDAR RAPIDS, IA

Iowa roofing business owner pleads guilty to harboring illegal aliens

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa - The owner of an eastern Iowa roofing company pleaded guilty in federal court on Monday to harboring and conspiring to harbor illegal aliens. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) led the investigation.

Samira Zuniga, 33, a U.S. citizen from Iowa City, Iowa, pleaded guilty to harboring and transporting an alien and conspiring with others to harbor, transport and encourage illegal aliens to reside in the United States.

According to court documents, Zuniga's company, Xtreme Construction, performed residential roofing work for another construction company in eastern Iowa. On April 26, nine illegal alien employees were arrested by ICE HSI in Hiawatha, Iowa, while working on a residential roofing job. Evidence presented at an earlier bond hearing showed that shortly after those arrests Zuniga had withdrawn several thousand dollars in cash from personal and business accounts and fled to Mexico with her husband, a Mexican citizen, and their two children. Zuniga was arrested on June 20 after she returned to the United States. At the time of her arrest, she and others were loading items into a cargo trailer to be taken back to Mexico. Zuniga's husband and children remained in Mexico.

"This plea represents an outstanding example of the HSI worksite enforcement strategy which focuses on employers who knowingly hire illegal workers," said Mike Feinberg, special agent in charge of ICE HSI in Bloomington, Minn. "We will use all of our resources to target criminal enterprises that break the law, exploit workers, and gain an unfair advantage over businesses which operate within the law."

Sentencing before U.S. District Court Chief Judge Linda R. Reade will take place after a presentence report is prepared. Pending her appearance for sentencing, Zuniga will remain in the custody of the U.S. Marshals Service in light of an earlier court finding that she poses a flight risk.

Zuniga faces a possible maximum sentence of 15 years' imprisonment, a \$500,000 fine, \$200 in special assessments, and six years of supervised release following imprisonment.

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U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.

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