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## News Releases



JULY 17, 2013 NEW YORK, NY

### Former NYPD officer pleads guilty to defrauding immigrants

NEW YORK – A former New York Police Department officer pleaded guilty to conning immigrants seeking driver's licenses and immigration assistance out of thousands of dollars Tuesday in Dutchess County Court. The guilty plea follows an investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the Wappingers Falls Police Department and the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles.

Miguel A. Rodriguez, 53, carried out the scheme while serving as a police officer and a liaison to the Latino community in the Village of Wappingers Falls. Under the terms of his plea agreement, Rodriguez is expected to be sentenced to one year imprisonment and to be subject to an order of restitution in the amount of \$13,862.

"Abusing the public trust to prey on the hopes and dreams of hardworking immigrants is despicable. A crime like this undermines cooperation between law enforcement and the community, and erodes the public's faith in government," said New York Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman. "It's a fundamental responsibility of my office to bring to justice those who engage in public corruption or defraud vulnerable New Yorkers, and we will continue to root out these crimes wherever they occur."

"Miguel Rodriguez was entrusted to serve the community but instead he robbed thousands of dollars from the very people he was sworn to protect. He preyed upon the necessity and hope of individuals seeking immigration assistance and legitimate government documents," said James T. Hayes Jr., special agent in charge of HSI New York. "HSI and its law enforcement partners work to dismantle fraud schemes that undermine the integrity of official state and U.S. government documentation."

Rodriguez admitted in court that, between October 2010 and August 2012, he charged immigrants \$300 each to enter a state lottery he falsely claimed could garner them valid New York State driver's licenses. Rodriguez admitted to charging victims \$500 to \$1,000 for "asylum and withholding of removal" applications, falsely promising that the applications would be reviewed by an attorney and filed with the appropriate immigration authorities – without even determining whether the victims could be eligible for the immigration benefits at all. In all, Rodriguez admitted to defrauding victims out of more than \$13,000.

As part of his fraudulent scheme, Rodriguez visited religious congregations and preyed upon unsuspecting churchgoers, portraying himself as a compassionate individual with official connections to help them get driver's licenses and other services. In reality, he had no such authority to provide the documents or services he purported to offer and instead he stole their money.

Rev. Alvin Bridgewater, of Poughkeepsie Vassar Road Church of the Nazarene, said, "These hardworking immigrants put their faith in Mr. Rodriguez and paid for what they were told was an honest and legal service only to find out that he was taking them for a ride. I commend Attorney General Schneiderman for sending a clear message that abusing unsuspecting and vulnerable communities will not be tolerated."

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