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**U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement**

## **U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement**

### **News Releases**

**September 17, 2009**

### **Leader of international counterfeit immigration document ring sentenced**

DENVER - The leader of a prolific and nationwide fraudulent document ring was sentenced Friday to serve 57 months in federal prison. The sentence was announced by U.S. Attorney David Gaouette. The case was investigated by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the IRS' Criminal Investigation Denver Field Office, Social Security Administration's Denver Office of the Inspector General and the Postal Inspection Service.

Pedro Castorena-Ibarra, 46, of Guadalajara, Mexico, was indicted by a federal grand jury in Denver on July 11, 2005. He was later extradited by the Republic of Mexico to the District of Colorado. On Feb. 5, 2009 Castorena-Ibarra pleaded guilty before by U.S. District Court Judge Lewis T. Babcock. Judge Babcock sentenced Castorena-Ibarra on Sept. 11.

According to the indictment and the subsequent plea agreement, from May 1998 through February 2005, Castorena-Ibarra conspired with others to manufacture and distribute various counterfeit documents, such as alien registration cards and Social Security cards. Castorena-Ibarra also counterfeited Republic of Mexico identification documents, such as the "Matricula Consular" identification card for illegal aliens and others for a fee.

The Castorena-Ibarra organization operated Los Angeles, San Francisco, Denver, Atlanta, Chicago, Las Vegas and New York City. During the course of the investigation, ICE seized more than 3 million counterfeit identity documents with an estimated street value of more than \$20 million. The documents were linked to over 400 investigations and seizures across the United States in more than 50 cities.

Judge Babcock noted during Castorena-Ibarra's sentencing that this investigation led to 20 cases in Colorado alone, charging 50 defendants, including Castorena-Ibarra's brother.

"The production and distribution of 3 million counterfeit identity documents allows the inference that there are millions of people who have been able, by paying money to the Castorena family and others, to be in this country illegally, said Babcock. "That is a huge insult to the law of the United States and even

more to the sovereignty of the United States of America and its integrity in its borders."

"This latest sentencing of the head of the Castorena Family Organization finally marks the end of one of the largest and most destructive fraudulent document rings in the United States," said Homeland Security Assistant Secretary for ICE John Morton. "The Castorena family has been brought to justice. But also, this investigation and prosecution stopped millions more fraudulent documents from threatening security at the local, regional and national levels."

"With the sentencing of Pedro Castorena-Ibarra, one of the largest fraudulent identification organizations has been dismantled," said U.S. Attorney David Gaouette.

"IRS-CI is committed to working with the United States Attorney's Office and other law enforcement agencies in prosecution individuals who intentionally violate our anti-money laundering laws by concealing income from illegal activities," said Christopher M. Sigerson, special agent in charge of IRS Criminal Investigation, Denver Field Office.

"This investigation is a good example of inter-agency cooperation," said Postal Inspector in Charge Shawn Tiller. "Many federal agencies came together and through a combined effort dismantled this organization. The Postal Inspection Service is pleased with the outcome of this investigation and committed to partnering with other law enforcement agencies whenever possible."

Special Agent in Charge Wilbert M. Craig of the Social Security Administration, Office of the Inspector General (SSA OIG) for the Denver Field Division Office said, "SSA OIG is dedicated to assisting the U.S. Attorney's Office and fellow law enforcement agencies through joint investigation of these criminal organizations. The successful prosecution of Pedro Castorena-Ibarra sends a clear signal which will deter individuals who may engage in identity theft or fraudulent use of Social Security Account numbers."

Assistant U.S. Attorney Joseph Mackey, District of Colorado, prosecuted this case.

-- ICE --

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.

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